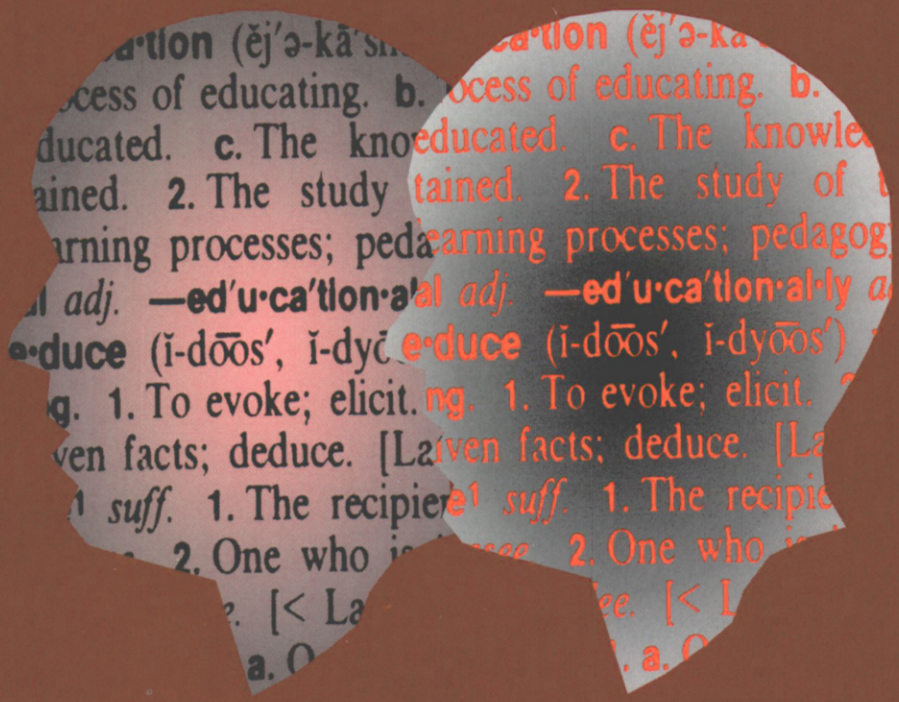

HIGHER EDUCATION EXCHANGE

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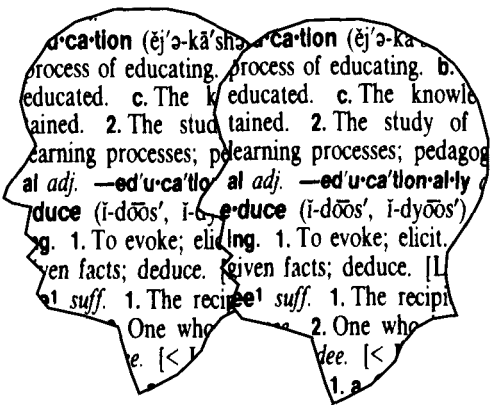

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FOREWORD

By David Brown and Deborah Witte

For at least the last 15 years, scholars, officeholders, journalists, and others have repeatedly pointed out disturbing trends in society's mistrust, disengagement, and dissatisfaction with political and social institutions. In particular, most Americans report that they experience politics as a spectator sport. They see their role as passive, pleading for their private interests, as innocent, hapless victims. Americans' dissatisfaction, however, extends beyond politics to include big business, media, and even religion. Do institutions of higher education dare hold themselves apart from this rampant disaffection with American systems? Can educators afford to ignore the warning signals being sent by the majority of Americans when they respond to sample surveys and focus groups with an overwhelming "thumbs down" to the way things currently work in institutions of all types?

What if university presidents were to look beyond their capital campaigns and legislative agendas? What if educators were to put aside for the moment what they should do about tuition costs and levels of financial aid? What if everyone in academe were to see a larger problem that should engage their energies — the estrangement of Americans one from another and the consequent decline of public life? What if they were to act together to help build a vital public life in their respective communities and across the country?

The assumption now is that professional credentials qualify the graduates of our colleges and universities to be more effective and influential participants in public life by virtue of their training and education. What more can higher education do that it is not already doing? Plenty.

To build a public life is to put aside professional credentials and rediscover each other on more egalitarian grounds — the capacity to deliberate together about our common problems and possibilities. A robust public life requires making less rather than more distinctions between and among citizens — to enhance everyone's capacity for "public work" rather than only addressing

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individual deficiencies through professional intervention.

Building such a public life does not undermine the obvious need for degree getting and degree giving. By helping people connect with each other, by helping to make publics that come together to address their mutual problems, colleges and universities enlarge local networks that will seek out the physical and human resources of their higher education institutions.

Among the scholars who are wrestling with these questions are those whose works appear in this volume. Uncovering the disconnect between the public, the authors have discovered tools, uncovered shared interests, and identified added values that are important.

We begin with an essay by R. Claire Snyder who provides a glimpse into the history of higher education in this country. From its beginnings in the seventeenth-century Puritan community to the modern day emergence of community colleges and historically black colleges and universities, the mission of higher education has been alternately entwined with and removed from the needs and dreams of the polity. The current situation Snyder describes, that "the professionalization that was designed to solve the public problems of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century has also led to an ever-widening gap between the public and its institutions," sets the stage for the essays that follow.

Robert A. Beauregard in his essay, "The Public Negotiation of Knowledge," provides three rules by which a scholar can add value to the public discourse. He admonishes academics to be relevant, to be understandable, and to be engaged. The goal, he says, is not "one of reconciling the value in professions with the way value is expressed in the public realm, but of *accommodating* the unavoidable inconsistency so that action might proceed." Connecting to the public, he argues, is more than deliberating with the public. It is "engagement that adds value to democratic deliberations."

Donald Roy, in the next essay, engages the structure of a dialogue to offer commentary about dialogue and its virtues and vices. Using the protagonists ODD and EVEN, he presents a running dialogue wherein they argue for and against the monologue, discuss the merits and faults of professional conventions, and expose the irony and the danger inherent in dialogue. ODD and EVEN attempt to persuade, debate, and cajole the other into accepting their point of view, with the result being notable.

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Nothing resolved, but much learned, they both live to dialogue another day.

The essay by Mary B. Stanley examines the dilemma faced by most faculty today. Do they work under the conditions "of an increasingly free labor which by virtue of its individualism, precariousness, and isolation seems incapable of creating community, collective resistance, or even perhaps public life"? Are faculty a powerless, contingent work force, experts without power, position, or security? Stanley proposes another possibility that lies in the relationship of academics to the public. She urges faculty to remember the democratic ideals that academics share with the public, namely "the desire for decent, stable work, a collective commitment to creating . . . a flourishing life for all citizens, a sense of community and belonging, and a fundamental sense of fair play."

The essays by Finnell (with a sidebar by Jim Knauer with an invitation to participate), McKenzie, and Prenshaw provide examples of how faculty have begun to engage with the public around issues in higher education.

Susanna Finnell, as past president of the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC), relates the experience of this national group's attempt to engage the public through forums held around the country. Spurred on by critical remarks in a foundation report, the NCHC sought insight into the public's attitudes toward higher education. Among the NCHC findings was that the public sees two seemingly inconsistent goals for higher education, preparing students for the workplace and preparing students to be lifelong learners. While these findings were useful, other unanticipated consequences of the experience were discovered. For these Honors professionals, one outcome of this project was making more use of the "tool" of deliberation. Finnell sees it as the "key to moving the organization forward . . . a way to strengthen, in the end, what education in a democratic society is all about: creating citizens who practice knowing."

Robert H. McKenzie, in his article, "Learning Civic Effectiveness," weds the idea of civic learning to the practice of experiential education. Like R. Claire Snyder, McKenzie roots his comments in the historical purposes of higher education. He sees restoring the civic purposes of higher education through four possible approaches: service-learning; deliberative skill-building; democratizing the campus; and emphasizing the traditional liberal

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arts education. But more important to McKenzie is that each of these approaches has a connection to the familiar elements of experiential learning.

The next essay, by Peggy Prenshaw, provides a study of the way humanities in general, and literature specifically, parallels the deliberations that "citizens in a democratic society must necessarily employ in deciding issues of public policy." But Prenshaw weaves a quite convincing example of how the knowledge needed to interpret a text or answer a public policy question is a knowledge that can only be constructed by deliberating with others. It is the "empirical undecidability of questions," she asserts, raised both by the text and by the policy question that is similar. The interpretation of a wide and diverse range of human experience, along with the complexity of language, makes both text and policy soulmates for Prenshaw.

David Mathews closes the volume with an article that explores the full range of meaning and the many definitions and characteristics of the word public. Doing so is useful, he says, "when examining the relationship between the public and the academy." He issues an invitation to the reader to interrogate the implications of these different understandings and to share with us the ways their institutions have seen their responsibilities for teaching, research, and service within the academy.

All of the possibilities presented in these essays are only a part of the scaffolding needed to bridge the gap between the professional space of our colleges and universities and the public space they can help create and share with Americans from every walk of life. For a century now, the progressive mission of professionalized service has been pursued. It is time that another mission be pursued with equal urgency — creating the space for individual Americans to find each other and the work they can share in a public life together. No democratic society can sustain itself without such an effort being made. This volume is our effort. We would welcome hearing about your efforts.

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THE PUBLIC AND ITS COLLEGES:

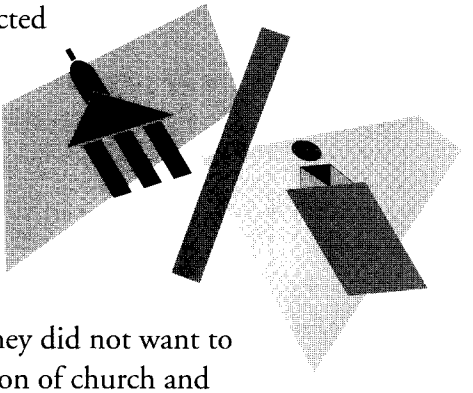
Reflections on the History of American Higher Education

By R. Claire Snyder

As we approach the turn of the twenty-first century, a persistent disconnect exists between the public and what should be public institutions: our government, our court system, our prisons, our public schools, and our institutions of higher education. But should institutions of higher education connect with the public? Does higher education have a role to play in a democracy? Does democracy need higher education? And if so, what particular kind of education? In beginning to address these important questions, reflections on the history of higher education as it relates to public life in America could provide some guidance.

Religious Publics and Colonial Colleges

The Puritan community of the Massachusetts Bay Colony founded Harvard College in 1636 in order to train those who would govern its Christian commonwealth. The nature of Puritan society directly affected both who its governors would be and what they would study in college. Since the early Puritans wanted a perfectly united community and a public life devoted to serving God, their religious and political spheres were naturally interconnected. Nevertheless, since they did not want to replicate the traditional Anglican fusion of church and state, they simultaneously made a conceptual distinction between the two spheres. Thus, while citizenship in the seventeenth-century Puritan community required membership in the Congregationalist Church and church leaders took a lead role in



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political life by sermonizing on election day and consulting with civil magistrates, ministers were barred from holding political office and the courts were nonecclesiastical.

Due to the nature of their community, the Puritans needed the leadership of both ministers and lawyers, and so they founded Harvard College to train these men to tend to public affairs. The first institution of Puritan sacred/civil society, Harvard developed as a distinct entity, separate from both church and state yet subject to the authority of both. Although Harvard College trained both sacred and civil leaders, all its students were educated with the same curriculum, a classical (liberal arts) curriculum that included the great works of moral philosophy, theology, history, and literature. Interestingly, although the study of Scripture took a central place in Puritan education, so did the great pagan works of Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero, among others.

The Puritans considered a classical curriculum that foregrounded normative issues both appropriate and necessary for those who would tend to public affairs for three reasons. First, the humanistic tradition transmitted to community leaders knowledge of accepted truths as revealed through the great classical and religious texts. Second, studying the liberal arts nurtured in students the inherent political capacity for reflection, a capacity essential to government aimed at the common good. And finally, the classical curriculum was designed to instill in students an excellent moral character.

Like Massachusetts Bay, other homogeneous religious communities also founded colleges to train those who would govern. During the colonial years, a multiplicity of Protestant sects led in turn to a proliferation of church-dominated colleges. The Anglicans founded William and Mary in 1693, and the Connecticut Congregationalists founded Yale College in 1701. This pattern of congregationally based colleges accelerated during the Great Awakening that produced the College of New Jersey (Princeton) founded by the Presbyterians in 1746, Brown founded by the Baptists in 1764, Queens College (Rutgers) founded by the Dutch Reformed Church in 1766, and Dartmouth founded by the Congregationalists in 1769. In addition, an Old Light coalition with Anglican leadership and Presbyterian support founded Kings College (Columbia) in 1754 and the College of Philadelphia (the University of Pennsylvania) in 1755. Despite denominational sponsorship and control, however, these institutions were liberal

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arts colleges, not divinity schools per se; they served their particular communities by producing public leaders.

During the eighteenth century, the character of public life in the colonies began to change. Population growth and colonial sprawl, increased immigration of new European ethnic groups, intermarriage between different sects, and the expansion of commerce, all worked together to create a larger and more heterogeneous public realm — a public realm populated by not only Yankees, but also the Scotch-Irish, Scots, Germans, and Dutchmen; not only Congregationalists but also Presbyterians, Quakers, Baptists, Lutherans, Mennonites, Anglicans, and members of the Dutch Reformed Church. This burgeoning heterogeneity, combined with the flowering of the Enlightenment as well as monarchical demands for religious freedom and suffrage for Anglicans, created an increasingly tolerant atmosphere in eighteenth-century America. Moreover, even Puritanism itself began to relax as a second generation, raised under more prosperous conditions and without the hardships of religious persecution, came of age.

Princeton was the first college conceived within the newly formed heterogeneous public. That is to say, Princeton was the first college chartered in a province with no established church, was the first to receive no state aid and to remain free of state control, and was the first to have intercolonial rather than exclusively local influences. Although deeply influenced by its Presbyterian founders, Princeton was hospitable to students from a variety of sects. As American public life was becoming more diverse, institutions like Princeton emerged to accommodate these changes.

American Colleges in the Age of the Democratic Revolution

As the American Revolution approached, the colonial colleges continued to offer a classical liberal arts curriculum foregrounding normative issues — but with some important modifications. First, higher education began placing a greater emphasis on teaching undergraduates to exercise their own personal judgment rather than just absorbing the great truths — a pedagogical method more appropriate for an increasingly democratic public. Second, as the American public became more concerned about questions of political legitimacy, the colonial colleges followed suit by beginning to allow discussions of overtly political topics. Third, colleges continued to train community leaders for civil society, but these leaders

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". . . the liberal arts were becoming the civic arts."

less often filled the pulpits and more often planned the revolution. And finally, the trend toward greater attention to politics accelerated with the addition of political philosophy to the standard curriculum, including William Paley's *Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy* and Montesquieus' *Spirit of the Laws*. In fact, one might say that the liberal arts were becoming the civic arts.

American public life during the eighteenth century was becoming more secular, and the colleges followed this trend. The Enlightenment's emphasis on universal reason undergirded international struggles for popular rather than clerical or monarchical sovereignty. Advances in science also fed into secularism, although it is important to note that science was not yet seen as undermining Christianity, and the natural moral philosophy that came out of the Enlightenment was not seen as contradicting Protestant theology. To the contrary, the Enlightenment seemed to provide a secular foundation for Protestant Christian values. Protestants had always emphasized the importance of reason and so were quite accepting of Enlightenment moral philosophy. Thus, a liberal arts curriculum aimed at nurturing the capacity for reflection pleased Protestants as well as secularists.

Out of this Enlightenment context came the American Revolution and the constitutional establishment of a secular state. This innovative approach to government raised the question of how morality would be upheld without an official church. Thomas Jefferson, following Rousseau, believed that a secular state must provide citizens with a common set of moral values to replace traditional religion, and that colleges and universities should play a key role in disseminating this new civil religion. Jefferson wanted the secular government to organize a common educational system, including public universities. The secular state as the instrument of the public should support secular institutions of higher education that would educate both citizens and public leaders.

In 1819, Jefferson succeeded in founding the University of Virginia (UVA), a state-sponsored university without an official religious affiliation. However, to fend off accusations of godlessness, Jefferson invited particular denominations to set up divinity schools nearby, so that students could get whichever sectarian viewpoint they chose, while also receiving the benefits of a heterogeneous secular university. (The denominations did not take him up on his offer.) Nevertheless, while the University of Virginia rep-

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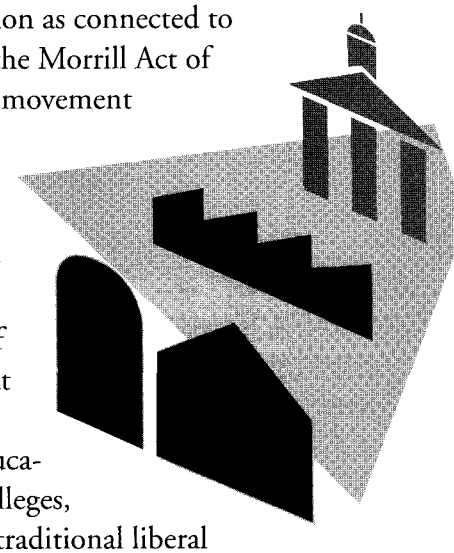
resents the prototype of Jefferson's secular dream and prefigured the modern university, it was also an anomaly; the vast majority of colleges continued to be denominationally founded and controlled.

So UVA notwithstanding, during the early nineteenth century, we see the rapid proliferation of religiously based colleges that were very closely linked to particular communities. (Between 1800 and 1861, the number of colleges increased tenfold and that is only counting those that actually survived.) Communities wanted their sons to be educated locally, and having a local college became a key component of civic pride. However, because particular communities tended to be religiously homogeneous, the rapid expansion of locally rooted colleges also reinforced their denominational character. Although many of these colleges were actually more like glorified high schools, the point remains that in the early nineteenth century, the public saw institutions of higher education as central to civic life.

". . . the public saw institutions of higher education as central to civic life."

Land-Grant Colleges and the Public Work Tradition

The idea of higher education as connected to public life became manifest in the Morrill Act of 1862. The resulting land-grant movement broadened the public purposes of higher education in three major ways. First, the land-grant colleges were founded to serve the agricultural and industrial masses (90 percent of the American population at that time) and so greatly extended the public's access to higher education. Second, the land-grant colleges, through their emphasis on the traditional liberal arts curriculum, strove to nurture their students' inherent capacity for reflection — an essential precondition for civic autonomy. And finally, these institutions combined the classical curriculum with an agricultural and mechanical education that would enable students to return to their local communities and engage in the public work of community problem solving. These colleges continued the tradition of training those who would govern public affairs, but who those people were and what they studied expand-



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ed in accordance with public needs.

Historically Black Colleges

During this same time period, also came the first historically black colleges that sought to bring the traditional benefits of higher education to black communities. Founded by white philanthropists in conjunction with black churches, these new private colleges, like the land-grant institutions, combined a traditional liberal arts curriculum aimed at nurturing the capacity for reflection and creating a strong moral character with the practical skills necessary for black community problem solving. These colleges strove to train the leadership necessary for black community autonomy, in this case primarily teachers. Of course, given the circumstances, most of these "colleges" were actually more like secondary schools — as was the case with many white religious schools (as noted above). Nevertheless, the important point here is that black communities saw these colleges as central to their emerging public life.

The Emergence of the Modern University-As-We-Know-It

Along with the democratization of access to higher education, however, came a huge transition in the nature of higher education with the emergence of the modern university and graduate education. And again, these changes are directly related to changes in American public life. In the latter part of the nineteenth century, the emancipation of the slaves, the emergence of significant class distinctions, changes in immigration, and the growth of cities, all resulted in a much more heterogeneous American public. Fear of this increasing diversity led to a variety of attacks on popular sovereignty, including the Progressive emphasis on professional governance through the use of social science. At the same time, the unfolding of industrialization, the creation of railroads, and the expansion of the American market created the need for a modern state to regulate industry and commerce, and for professionals to staff the new bureaucracies. In the end, the great Progressive dream of harnessing the new professions and social sciences for the good of all, ultimately ushered in the professional politics paradigm — the idea that the public must be governed by experts and professionals.

"The goal was to nurture the reflective capacities of students."

The modern university and graduate education emerged concurrently with the professional politics paradigm. As we have seen,

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prior to the creation of the modern university, higher education focused on conveying a finite body of knowledge that came out of the classical humanistic tradition. The goal was to nurture the reflective capacities of students and to instill in them an excellence of character. However, with the development of science came the idea that professors could actually produce new knowledge. Consequently, professors began specializing in particular areas in which they would generate original scholarship and eventually become experts.

The dawn of the social sciences held out the hope that professionals could solve the growing social problems and political conflicts plaguing the American public in an objective way. However, the early concern with using knowledge for social reform soon came to conflict with the ideal of objectivity, and the originally unified approach to social science quickly fell prey to specialization, leading to the proliferation of academic disciplines, each of which claimed authority over a particular segment of reality. In fact, by 1915, the Academy had, for the most part, broken with its traditional normative concerns. This break marks a shift from a philosophical and values-based approach to public life to a scientific and professional one, and it must be understood as a part of a general epistemological shift from religion to science that was going on in America during these same years.

With the emergence of the modern university and graduate education, the gap between the public and American higher education widened markedly. In fact, the new discipline of political science began to reveal the existence of a supposedly irrational public. Polling data (available in the 1930s), the psychoanalytic discovery of the unconscious, the rise of authoritarianism around the world, and the increasing relativism in the Academy, all led political scientists and other professional elites to question the valorization of democracy. What's more, an emerging suspicion of indoctrination — a reaction to the rise of nazism and communism — made universities reluctant to teach civic ideals in any substantive way and reinforced the need for scientific objectivity.

The Paradox of the Community Colleges

Ironically, the junior college movement arose out of the desire of elite universities to protect themselves from the masses. As Dean James Russell of the Columbia Teachers College put it in 1908, "If

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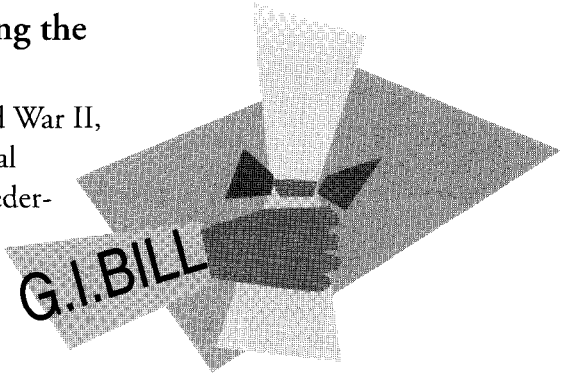
the chief objective of government be to promote civil order and social stability, how can we justify our practice in schooling the masses in precisely the same manner as we do those who are to be our leaders?" In order to protect university research and professional training programs from the onslaught of the supposedly ignorant public, and to prevent the creation of an overly educated work force, administrators at elite institutions like Columbia and the University of Chicago proposed the creation of two-year colleges offering vocational training. While junior colleges would offer a college-prep option, the architects of these new people's colleges planned to track two-thirds to three-quarters of junior college students into terminal vocational programs.

The public, however, wanted a traditional liberal arts education not vocational training and so refused to enroll in the vocational tract. (Only 25-30 percent of students ever opted for vocational training until the 1970s.) Junior colleges appealed to the public only as stepping-stones toward traditional four-year institutions. Consequently, out of an elitist attempt to insulate higher education from the public came the proliferation of two-year liberal arts colleges — the birth of the community college movement. And in the tradition of the land-grant institutions, these new community colleges sought to expand access to higher education, nurture the capacity for reflection through a traditional liberal arts curriculum, and provide students with the technical skills necessary to engage in public work — this time in cities as well as in small communities.

Higher Education during the Cold War



With the end of World War II, public desires for educational access were realized as the federal government threw its support behind the expansion of higher education. In 1947, the Truman Commission issued its report, *Higher Education for American Democracy,* which called for democratic access to higher education. The resulting G.I. Bill, as well as a series of subsequent legislation, provided funding for veterans who

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". . . racial and religious barriers to admission were officially ended."

wanted to pursue higher education and for the institutions they attended. Then in 1958, the National Defense Education Act proclaimed that "the security of the Nation requires the fullest development of mental resources and technical skills of its young men and women." This act further expanded federal programs of institutional and individual financial aid. With massive federal assistance, the number of two- and four-year institutions of higher education multiplied. In addition, racial and religious barriers to admission were officially ended.

However, despite the greatest democratization of higher education ever realized, the gap between the public and its colleges continued to widen as the trends initiated at the inception of the modern university came to fruition. That is, as a college education became widely available to members of the American public, the content of that education shifted. The curriculum began to focus less and less on nurturing civic capacities and more and more on serving the professional and vocational interests of individual students. So while colleges and universities succeeded in producing experts and professionals, they failed at educating citizens prepared to participate in democratic self-government. As the process of specialization accelerated, it eroded our ability to understand the world as a complex whole. And more recently, many of the contemporary changes within higher education, despite the best of intentions, have (ironically) further eroded civic life — changes such as the increasing hegemony of postmodern moral relativism, the fragmentation of identity politics, attacks on the ideal of the liberal arts, demands for more vocationalism, and the recent implementation of reforms inspired by big business. In short, it is no longer self-evident that institutions of higher education have public as well as individualistic purposes.

Conclusion

On the other hand, as we can see from our historical reflections, higher education has always served the public purpose of training those who would govern public affairs, and that is exactly what it does today. That is to say, because we are still entrenched in the age of professional politics, our institutions of higher education still train the professionals and experts we rely on to govern in our stead. But what we can also conclude from our reflections is

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that the professionalization that was designed to solve the public problems of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century has also led to an ever-widening gap between the public and its institutions, a gap that now prevents us from solving the problems that plague us as we enter the next century.

What seems inevitable based on our past history, however, is that institutions of higher education will indeed evolve in relation to larger public needs. So if we are at a place in history where only the public can solve public problems, then institutions of higher education must yield to this imperative. My hope is that through historically informed public reflection on the proper relationship between the public and its colleges, we might be able to hasten a reconnection of higher education to public life. Then perhaps colleges and universities can once again meet public needs, this time through facilitating the hard work of public-building and by fostering the practices of deliberative democracy.

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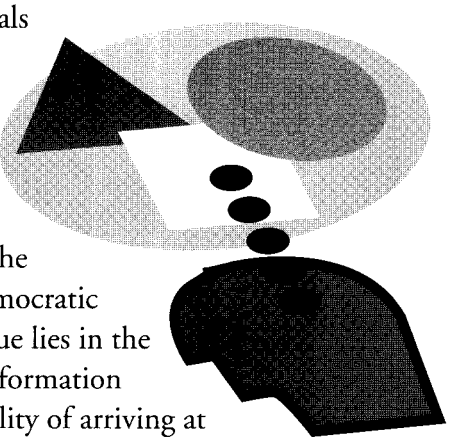
THE PUBLIC NEGOTIATION OF KNOWLEDGE

By Robert A. Beauregard

The call for public scholarship, for the immersion of intellectuals in the deliberations that sustain democracy, rests on three premises: first, that intellectuals have something unique to say; second, that what they have to say will add value; and third, that this value can be realized only if intellectuals engage in dialogues with ordinary citizens. Between the secluded intellectual and effective engagement, though, lie obstacles, not the least of which is the problem of how professional knowledge can be made into public knowledge.

The core task of intellectuals is to reflect deeply on what is known about the world and how we know it. Intellectual knowledge is meant to be specialized and, in this fashion, to transcend common sense. Despite this, proponents of public scholarship argue that specialized knowledge and professional ways of thinking are underrepresented in public debates.

Consider the possibility that intellectuals might be irrelevant; that is, have knowledge so arcane as to be of little, general use. With apologies, one might place "pure" mathematicians and composers of avant-garde music in this category. Their work is unlikely to contribute to the troubles that affect large numbers of people in their daily lives. We would be ill advised to assume that authority in the realm of particle physics qualifies a person to make pertinent comments on the location of a homeless shelter. Consequently, when these intellectuals live public lives, they do so as ordinary citizens. The debate over public scholarship, then, is mainly about instances in which intellectuals possess relevant knowledge.



Relevance, however, is merely the precondition for adding value to democratic deliberations. The source of that value lies in the novel perspectives and specialized information offered by intellectuals. The probability of arriving at

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a good decision is ostensibly improved by expanding knowledge of and ways to think about shared concerns.

Assumed here is that more information and different points of view are better than less information and fewer points of view. Diversity's value is unquestioned. Yet, more sophisticated knowledge and additional perspectives can just as easily bring disarray and block people from acting together. Value is not automatically realized.

Another way that intellectuals might add value is by providing guidance. In this interpretation, intellectuals gently prod citizens to accept positions that intellectuals have already crafted. The knowledge and competence of intellectuals dominates, even if veiled by Socratic technique. Once enlightened, ordinary citizens grasp the value of professional knowledge.

This role sits uncomfortably with the deliberative and democratic public imagined by those for whom John Dewey is mentor. It is a soft version of the "rule of experts" and violates an implicit goal of public scholarship: to maintain intellectuals as different but not superior. The public scholarship argument is not simply about what intellectuals have to offer, it is also about the democratization of elites. Intellectuals are meant to become ordinary citizens, of sorts. This brings us to the third premise.

In order to be part of a civic culture, intellectuals must leave their libraries, carry on conversations outside circles of like-minded acquaintances, and join ordinary citizens in mutual learning. They must become, in Jay Rosen's terminology, public scholars. To do so, and this is crucial, they must be physically present in public forums. Intellectuals and ordinary citizens must literally come together.

Proximity is thus essential to a deliberative democracy. Ordinary citizens have to be able to question intellectuals about their ideas and their ways of framing issues, and receive an immediate response. Learning occurs through dialogue.

Intellectuals must be prepared to negotiate publicly what they know and how they know it. Scholarship, in effect and in part, is done in public. Only in this way can professional knowledge be understood by ordinary citizens. It must be transformed into public knowledge.

Such a transformation requires the negotiation of intellectual culture. Academically trained scholars develop their knowledge

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within specialized settings. Their skepticism is *organized* and the professional communities they occupy influence the questions that are asked and what answers will be considered valid. When intellectuals adhere to the rules that govern how knowledge is valued, they rise in stature in these communities and gain authority. When they do not, their ideas are rejected.

Amateur knowledge and the experiences of ordinary citizens are not judged by professional criteria. The validity (or, more popularly, the truthfulness) and utility of understandings are subject to different rules. Common sense, intuition, and social pressures are more likely to govern. Authority is derived less from a body of sustained and validated work than from immediate contributions to ongoing debates about current difficulties. Intellectualized ways of thinking, of testing knowledge, and of resolving impasses are foreign to how ordinary people normally operate. Ordinary citizens are more likely to ask whether what they know will allow them to act more effectively than to ask whether it will "further" scholarship. The idle curiosity of intellectuals is immaterial to democratic deliberations.

The rules of evidence, then, are not the same for intellectuals as they are for ordinary citizens. More importantly, the rules followed by intellectuals are not inherently preferable. In fact, because such rules sharply distinguish between types of knowledge, because they confine dialogue to only specific types of evidence, they are in tension with the variety of experiences and voices that make democratic deliberations so rich and vibrant. For intellectuals to make a positive contribution to public dialogues, these differing perspectives must be mediated.

"If public intellectuals are to add value to democratic deliberations, they must be relevant, be understandable, and be engaged."

If public intellectuals are to add value to democratic deliberations, they must follow three rules: be relevant, be understandable, and be engaged. All three are related to the public negotiation of knowledge and each requires intellectuals to enter into the public realm with humility, abandoning the certainty (and even arrogance) that is often valued in professional communities.

Intellectuals expend a great deal of energy gathering knowledge and making their logics explicit, reflecting on them, and exposing them to criticism. Their identities are heavily invested in these tasks and the arguments to which they lead. As a result, the inclination of intellectuals is to resist intrusion.

Regarding this resistance, Thomas Bender once wrote that

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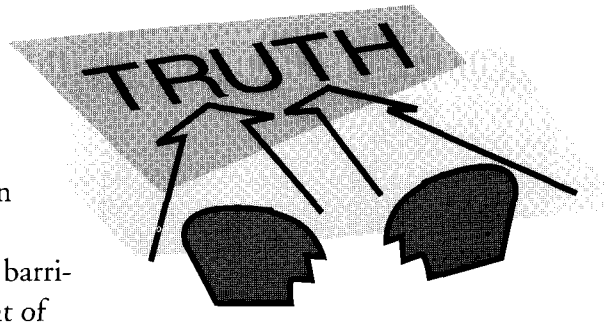
the politics of ordinary citizens and the inquiry of intellectuals will "converge in the quest for better truth." A similar and more pervasive expectation is that common sense will prevail. In these ways, the barriers to the civic engagement of intellectuals will be overcome.



Truth and common sense, though, mean something different to intellectuals than to nonintellectuals. The goal, then, becomes not one of reconciling the irreconcilable but forging accommodations that will bypass any elusive consensus on shared values, accept the unavoidable inconsistency of interpretations, and still allow actions to be taken.

As ordinary citizens negotiate the usefulness of intellectual knowledge, they also destabilize the authority of intellectuals. That authority is grounded in professional rules of engagement. Questioning the latter undermines the former. Professional knowledge cannot be negotiated, though, unless the boundaries of intellectual authority are allowed to be contested. Everyone needs to know where that authority ends and when it is that intellectuals turn into ordinary citizens.

In addition to being relevant, intellectuals must also be understandable. Undisputed is that intellectuals have unique ways of speaking and writing. They mobilize neologisms and phrases with particular meanings in order to converse within specialized communities. Intellectual talk makes possible highly focused and efficient conversations with like-minded people. For intellectuals to be understood in public, however, their language needs to be translated and their meanings revealed to the uninitiated.

The common ground, I suspect, is metaphors and storytelling. In order for understandings to be held in common, bridges need to be built between a dense, specialized language and the experiences of ordinary citizens. Intellectuals can do this by searching for widely recognized figures of speech from everyday life.

Finally, public intellectuals need to engage. This involves more than simply meeting and deliberating with ordinary citizens. It also

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means connecting empathically to the issues. Intellectuals are often passionate about their arguments, but leery of sentiments that might cloud their critical faculties. Ordinary citizens, on the other hand, become involved with public issues precisely because they have a personal and emotional stake in them. Emotion and reason, passions and interests, are inseparable. Consequently, intellectuals must reduce the critical distance that serves them so well in private. Otherwise, intellectuals will remain disconnected from the ways in which ordinary citizens understand public issues. Engagement in personally meaningful ways is the objective.

The public negotiation of professional knowledge enables intellectuals to be engaged and it is this engagement that adds value to democratic deliberations. To put it simply, if intellectuals are engaged, relevant, understood, and open to mutual learning, public scholarship will follow.

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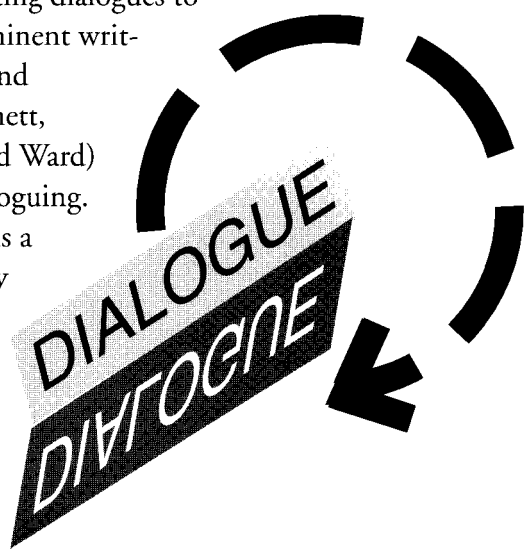
A DIALOGUING WE SHALL GO?

By Donald Roy

In a small city on the coast of Greece where land (culture) and water (commerce) meet, two persons sit at an outdoor cafe during one of those resplendent days when you know that all is right in the heavens (thus the sun's brilliance), if only not here on earth. Their idle conversation turns unexpectedly into a pointed dialogue. Something is in that sea air breeze that beckons. . . .

ODD: How odd it is, all those books and articles with titles using the term "dialogue" and all the calls to "dialogue," yet who and how many are actually writing dialogues to provoke further dialogue? Prominent writers such as Buber, Habermas, and Gadamer (less prominently Arnett, Clark, Johannesen, Stewart, and Ward) call for dialogue but do no dialoguing. Did you know that there even is a Canadian journal of philosophy called *Dialogue* that never has published any dialogues? How about a dialogue to provoke further dialogue, dialoguing about dialoguing about dialoguing. . . ? A wonderful infinite progress.



EVEN: Even so, there is always a dialogue going on in the heads of writers, and some of those you mention think they are doing their part in a hypothetical dialogue. Do not writers and speakers anticipate and react to their potential critics in the process of writing and speaking? Do not most writers and speakers take up their task because there is this *implicit* dialogue, i.e., they believe they are responding to certain writers and speakers other than themselves? Writers and speakers are just keeping up their own side

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or part of the matter at hand.

ODD: Yes, but their preference is for the monologue, which is to say, the long, uninterrupted, one-way speech that tends to silence a real interchange. Listeners/readers just approvingly nod off, or they respond with a countermonologue. This "implicit dialogue," as you call it, is no real back-and-forth dialogue at all. Frequently, the "other" becomes either the adversary dismissed in passing, or some "straw person" disposed of in absentia.

The monologue serves well our conceited egos: take a stand and stand your ground. There is some kind of reluctance and aversion to acknowledging that there are credible, other sides to an issue. Instead, pseudoliberal democratic pluralists that we are, we play King of the Mountain and present ourselves as if talking treatises.

EVEN: Are you claiming that there is some kind of political dishonesty, hypocrisy, bias, or even conspiracy going on? How else but in a straightforward monologue and treatise can opinions and arguments be developed at length? Research findings cannot be presented in a dialogue. Yet most scholarly articles analyze and critique the writings and positions of other scholars as a matter of course. In response, an interior dialogue or conversation goes on as well when we intelligently read any research, essay, etc.

ODD: You have correctly identified the problem: not a conspiracy but an institutionalized mode of discourse rigidly adhered to, originally fronting as philosophical communication and today posing as scientific method. A scholar and academic must adhere to these professional conventions to have any credibility. Woe to the independent, free-lance, loose fish, who we once called a respected public philosopher. Of course, some exceptional philosophers of old wrote dialogues: Plato, Aristotle (all of his dialogues, sadly, are lost), Augustine, Aquinas (his *disputatio* mode is dialogic, I would contend), Berkeley, Hume, and Diderot. This group would altogether form, with all their substantive differences, a great dialogue or "meeting of the minds." (Do you remember Steve Allen's television program of the same title?)

How ironic that scientific research findings are presented to us nondialogically! Would not we learn a lot more about the process of scientific discovery if we were privy to the dialogue going on among scientists, or even just within the head of a scientific researcher? What about all those hypotheses and experiments

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before a scientist "hits on" his validated explanation? Is not science basically a rigorous endeavor to disprove hypotheses? Instead, we are left with the totally misleading impression that the subject matters of science and mathematics are cut and dried, conclusively certain, and fixed. As a matter of fact, fascinating disputes exist among scientists and mathematicians. Yet we operate with a bottom-line, textbook-terminal mentality, and then we wonder why so many minds (especially young ones) are uninspired and bored.

EVEN: It is only reasonable to expect that people deliver results. On the basis of such results we have the building blocks to construct edifices. Perhaps your dialogic position has usefulness as a pedagogical device to spur interest and activate unaroused minds. Otherwise, you appear to be some sort of intellectual Luddite, another postmodern deconstructionist, more driven by wrecking foundations than by achieving anything constructive.

ODD: Your rejoinder assumes that all intellectual activity is a human construction, even though there are some (mainly ancient) thinkers who contend that we discover (not invent and construct) existent order (since nature exists independent of us and is intelligible/rational). I bring this up solely to indicate that one of the great benefits of dialogue is that no one speaker can get away with making statements based on unexamined assumptions. All assumptions need to be brought out in the open and challenged. It may not be a bad idea to have a few postmodern deconstructionists around, if only to prevent us from getting too self-assured and stodgy. However, dismantling and unraveling everything so that nothing stands is not the purpose of *true* dialogue. I see myself more as a provocateur and evocateur than a Luddite.

"Dialogues incite conflict and divisiveness."

EVEN: Dialogues, as you describe them, are more trouble than they are worth. In any academic study and in politics, we do not need more controversy that unsettles and confuses everything. People want to reach agreement that is based on facts and beliefs and that allows us to live and work together harmoniously. Dialogues incite conflict and divisiveness. A political speech that rallies and mobilizes people is what we need to get on track to resolve our political problems. Otherwise, people will find dialogues to be no more than some distracting war of words, no better than the talk shows recycling our personal lives amok.

ODD: You do not have a very high opinion of people. In a democracy we need to provide spaces where people can meaning-

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fully participate. A "true dialogue" does not degenerate into the rantings and ravings of those who bare their psyches for exhibitionist media entertainment and a financial payment. On the other hand, a true dialogue offers reasoned-out choices for listeners/readers, as well as the possibility of entering the dialogue and enjoining arguments on the various sides. Maybe you will hear your own voice in a true dialogue, or if not, at least you will be provoked to respond so that you can be heard.

EVEN: But these dialogues of yours are like a game playing with people's minds, or a contrivance bearing no relation to real discussion, which is very contingent and messy. I always had suspicions about Socrates being a manipulator bent on showing up others by refutations that were not always all that "logical." It is more natural to retire to one's desk and work out one's own position as a consequence of what one has read and discussed. Can anyone truly present the "other side" in all its strengths? To have a devil's advocate about might be useful, but in all seriousness, we each have the responsibility as individuals to clarify what we believe. Much of what you scourge as monological is a necessary first step to laying the groundwork for further discussion.

ODD: No doubt, dialoguing has its dangers. Those who feel the necessity of defending some status quo will find dialogic skepsis and aporia threatening, and they may extend the cup of hemlock to terminate such dialoguing. It is a serious matter, even in such a modern libertarian society as ours, to think about parameters, places, and persons when resorting to dialogue. A true dialogue that results in a relatively equal standoff may discourage some to the degree that they go nihilistic, as if all arguments are equal and nothing at all can be true. They conclude that whoever wields the biggest club (might makes right, not right makes might) wins the political prize. Power is the bottom line, not deliberation and persuasion. A dialogue that short-circuits (and actually ends) dialogue in just this "empowering" way is no true dialogue.

There are numerous ideals that we aspire to — justice, equality, civility, decency, the public good, peace — that have no definition outside an engagement of many diverse voices. These *idealistic* norms are no more than will-o'-the-wisps, if we do not engage each other in an effort to find out where we agree and where we disagree. Learning and education are fundamentally communal and not as individualistic as you would have, retiring us

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to our writing desks. That is why all those political science textbooks are deadeningly wrong when they give their reductionist definitions of politics as the pursuit of power and self-interest. Who has the opportunity to oppose such totalistic subsumptions? No one is present to question such all-encompassing utterances seemingly not subject to any possible instance of refutation. Monological absolutism at its finest hour! If politics is so reducible to power and coercion, then why even bother to deliberate and persuade? And then these same political scientists wonder why Congress (one important public space for rational deliberation and persuasion) is such a mess, and the presidency is subject to so many circumstances of power misusage, to put it delicately. Recent presidential administrations have become more defined by how many around the president have ended up on trial for wrongdoing. The rest of the president's so-called advisors have their heads stuck in the latest public opinion polls. Some meeting of minds!

EVEN: You are on quite a rhetorical roll and threateningly monological at that. Do you presume to do away with the reality of power and the pursuit of self-interest? What fantasy world have you conjured up? Your idealism puts on the political table the utterly undecidable — who has ever known what justice or the public good is? Such dialoguing promises interminable disputation. All too often these "norms" of yours have been masks for someone's power and self-interest, not to exclude the possibility that unresolved contention makes power wielding all the more attractive to those who quickly tire of such pointless wrangling.

"In a true dialogue there are discernible points of divergence and points of convergence."

ODD: Yes, indeed, and so it goes. But we can avoid the outcome of cynicism that I hear in your own postmodern voice by avoiding both the extremes of idealism and the extremes of realism. This outcome is precisely what dialogues achieve. Strictly speaking, true dialogues do not predetermine or favor any one side or outcome. All sides have something to contribute. Yet there may be no splitting the differences; we can be stuck with fundamental irreconcilables (i.e., in the abortion debate). Other times it is possible (if a person finds it reasonable) to combine the best of different sides (i.e., idealism and realism) and actually find an in-between or compromise position. In sum, in a true dialogue there are discernible points of divergence and points of convergence.

Further, you cannot be an idealist and a realist at the same time, but you can be one or the other at different times and on

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different issues. Perhaps a person can afford to be an idealist in domestic politics, but only a realist in international politics. Absolute consistency across the board is highly overrated (and dangerously ideological) in politics. Additionally, many of us can and should be willing to let the other side have its day to determine within certain controlling guidelines and standards whether, for example, proposed campaign spending reforms and budget deficit reduction plans can succeed. Sometimes we have no choice but to join the "loyal opposition" and await evaluation of outcomes, since public opinion, the electorate, or a working majority does not now support our own policy plans.

As for "justice" and the "public good," we naturally appeal to each other's sense of justice and the public good when their opposites, injustice and private greed, overwhelm us. No one, on their lonesome, has divined the meaning of these terms. It takes a rational, deliberative process among a diverse cross section of people to work out dialogically what justice and the public good are. In every particular instance of a conflict or dilemma, we have to initiate the process all over again. Yes, abstractly and theoretically, there are defining and competing general characteristics of justice and the public good. But politically we are expected to make decisions and act (praxis), which means we have to apply ourselves in a dialogical way such that diverse voices are heard and weighed. In the end, dialogues offer an open and public path of rational deliberation that should prevent masks of deceit characteristic of propagandistic lies.

EVEN: I do not see how you have escaped (or even transcended) self-interest and power considerations. There is no such "reason" independent of rational calculations regarding personal power and self-interest. You can categorize this as reductionist; I would counter that it is just the typical and expectable operations of the human mind. Few among us are saints. And when we reason or calculate together, we respond to the forcefulness of the arguments of others. Persuasion, even if on occasion it has nothing to do with our power and self-interest calculations, is the stronger, that is more forceful, argument. Thus, there is this kind of force or power to rational argumentation. It is not odd for a person to state that a certain argument is compelling. Perhaps the key point is that arguments that are persuasive, in the sense of being forceful and compelling, are arguments that we choose or allow to compel

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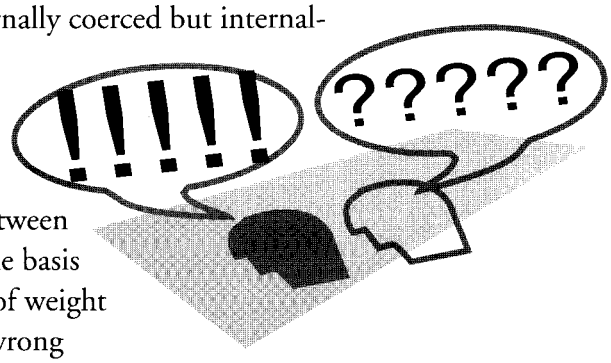
us. Thus, we are not externally coerced but internally compelled. Such is the freedom and respect we have for human dignity in a political democracy.



ODD: Choosing between different arguments on the basis of persuasion is a matter of weight not force. "Force" is the wrong metaphor and suggests a subordination of reason, a kind of overwhelming that may relate more to propaganda, mass psychology, and the bandwagon. On the other hand, "weight" suggests meatiness and substance, as if the mind's reason had some kind of scale. Of course, the weightiness of an argument needs to be explained, since not everyone has the same sense of weightiness. There is no universal, metric scale. It is through discursive, dialogic reason that a lot of "whys" are explained, and the argument always goes on.

"It is through discursive, dialogic reason that a lot of 'whys' are explained, and the argument always goes on."

For the most part, people will weigh consequences, and the "if . . , then" statement will be decisive, especially in political arguments. Quasi-causal types of argumentation, such as if we raise the minimum wage, then (a) people will have a better living wage, or (b) employment opportunities in low-level entry jobs will decrease, are typical in politics. However, strictly moral argumentation may center more on principles, as well as the argument from authority (i.e., the Bible, the Constitution, public opinion polls, research findings, etc.). It is always a curious matter whether the pragmatism of a person favoring "if . . , then" arguments overrides the theoretical and contemplative priority of principles.

EVEN: It is of limited value to focus solely on the *logos* of argumentation as you do. This argumentive logocentrism enables you to flaunt an objectivity regarding argumentation that is at best only a part of the game. The two other prongs of the argumentation triangle are *ethos* and *pathos*. *Ethos* refers to the speakers' or arguers' character and image, i.e., their self-presentation. Listening to Allan Bloom or William Buckley, Jr. can be quite an experience (pathos) in obnoxiousness, no matter how much their arguments alone lift you up and away from liberalism and do not close your mind. Therefore, *pathos* is just such an audience response to arguments. Both *ethos* and *pathos* tend to be subjective factors. More manipulatively rhetorical persons avoid the off-putting elitist snob-

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bery of Bloom-Buckley. For me, the real dialogue is in the dynamics between caller (speaker) and responder (audience) and not in any abstract and oracular *logos*.

ODD: The true dialogue occurs among friends or relative equals. You are far more of an elitist than I because you depend on (or is it prey on?) the inequality between the speaker and the audience to constitute your so-called implicit dialogue. What a charade of monological (one-way) domination. A true interchange or *pilpūl* is a back-and-forth, give-and-take, forget about personalities, let it out, self-revelation, that is open and willing to let the argument *(logos)* go wherever it may. Such is the *agon* (contest) as well as the *aporia* (bewilderment) that occurs when so much dialogic argumentation transpires.

In the best possible dialogue situation, arguments collide and sparks fly. Insights occur that otherwise would never have been possible. Socrates and Plato were amazed by this and clearly St. Thomas' *disputatio*, which presents a series of objections (negatives) to a philosophical/theological teaching of the Church, likewise relishes the mental stimulation of an erstwhile interlocutor. While reading Plato's Socratic dialogues in the original Greek, a person is amazed at the gerund fecundity of the Socratic *zetema* (inquiry) — groping, longing, straining, desiring, reaching, and so on — all the "ing" words of an erotic philosopher who is seeking more and more. . . .

EVEN: But Socrates, with his persistent questions and dismissive retorts, was quite offensive to just about anyone. No wonder the Athenian *demos* had enough of his mock inquiries. I. F. Stone had the effrontery to counter the rigged (by Plato) nature of beloved Socratic discourse and uncover the antidemocratic implications of Socrates' queryings. (It surprises me not at all that our law schools brag about their Socratic method!) And Aquinas, such an authoritarian, dogmatic Scholasticist! You do seem to have a predilection for the party of authoritarian order over the party of democratic liberty.

ODD: There is nothing inherently elitist, antidemocratic, and authoritarian about dialogues. In fact, the dialogues of Berkeley, Hume, Diderot, Cranston, and Gay are respective of the liberal Enlightenment and deeply skeptical of dogmatism.

EVEN: Nevertheless, it was safest for Berkeley, Hume, and Diderot to present their fundamental doubts in the form of a dialogue, where they would not have to be first-person accountable for

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their controversial personal beliefs. All such dialogue writing seems to be a way of avoiding getting oneself pinned down in writing. Plato was especially wary of writing and, of course, Socrates wrote nothing down at all. All of this may suggest that the truth is something secretive and esoteric. Can we afford such distance, indirection, and standoffishness today? There is no hemlock or guillotine for saying and writing just what one holds.

The problem of modern liberalism, the international relations paradigm, and the division between Jews and blacks, is related to both their successes (their enemies are routed) and their failure to accommodate internal differences. No one should underestimate a squabble within a family. You seem to expect that dialogues will cause people to rise to the highest level of moral and political principles. However, there are only perspectives, and all perspectives are relativistic and contingent. Dialogues may allow a needed confrontation to prevent discourse ossification. Perhaps we have found a common ground, if this is what you mean by the aporetic lessons of dialogues.

ODD: *Aporia* is only the beginning of wisdom, not the conclusion in some sort of relativistic perspectivalism that you seem to be recommending. If the standoff that dialogues originates is to have any promise, then we need to proceed beyond temporary paralysis. Aristotle offers us an insight with his proposal of the Golden Mean between the extremes of excess and deficit. In general, dialogues caution against extremes. Extremists drown out opponents in order to have any chance of victory. Dialogues contrariwise encourage finding a middle ground where possible, which is not necessarily or desirably splitting differences. As Aristotle says, this Mean is not an average or midpoint, but transcends the plane of what today we could label a Benthamite calculus.

EVEN: For a brief moment, I thought you were a flaming radical. How conservative your absolutism is now creeping back into the picture, what with your First Principles and your mysterious Golden Mean. The provocation of dialogues turns out to have fuzzy centrist consequences.

Some time ago, Walter Bagehot in a spree of liberality spoke of the coming "age of discussion." Don't you think it may be upon us now that just about all of us are (or soon will be) wired electronically? Michael Kinsley's SLANT on the Internet is in search of serious readers that think about what they read. Is this the via media that will knock down socioeconomic barriers to communication?

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ODD: Aren't we all tired of reading book after book that exists for the most part in its own little self-defined world? Maybe we fail to discern this to the degree we read books that conform to what we already are thinking. The self-satisfied and smug will always resist dialoguing. Dialogues are multidimensional and public, whereas monograph writing is one-way and private. At a time when the level of political discourse has sunk to the hawking of consumer goods and the demise of public intellectuals seems irreversible, we need a public space for an engaging public mode of discourse.

I am not impressed to date by what politically spews over the Internet, including Kinsley's SLANT. Who is going to harvest and distill the fine wine (if there is any) from this harvest of opinions? Mouthing out communication has more relevance to therapy sessions than real dialogue. Far better would it be to use a Web site to identify those qualified persons knowledgeable of particular issues, who then can be brought together for a dialogue that all others could beneficially access once completed. First, the dialogue among top-notch participants, then the pointed communication back and forth among additional participants. An editor could fix the eventual, completed dialogues so that all others could have a pivotal springboard for all kinds of diverse issues. Most of us first need to get our bearings and decide on what perspective to take on controversial issues. Perhaps to you democracy is a free-for-all, just as libertarians exalt capitalism because it is so wonderfully laissez-faire. But no healthy democracy is possible without qualified leaders who give focus and direction to public issues.

"No healthy democracy is possible without qualified leaders who give focus and direction to public issues."

EVEN: Your idea of dialoguing is too restrictive and sounds like a board of philosophic elders that Plato would empower. You are vulnerable to that distance and alienation that intellectuals and experts are so prone. The example of former governors Jerry Brown and Mario Cuomo, both of whom use radio talk shows to engage and connect with ordinary people, is the kind of democratic leadership that I advocate and admire. You can't have public philosophers (or public intellectuals) without including the public at their level.

ODD: Brown and Cuomo are coming to public philosophy from careers as inveterate politicians after having been politically only so successful. I do not sense that the public cares much to have them in public office. Nevertheless, they would be great interlocutors. However, I am looking for those who would be

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more skillfully interposed between philosophy and the public.

Today, the public is turned off (or deviantly entertained) by the rantings and ravings of the many voices that soon begin to resemble distraught monologues. There is no public forum that can handle all these private interests and concerns. On the other hand, when two or three or more of the right people are brought together, they rise to a higher standard of public discourse if indeed they are knowledgeable.

While the public philosopher indeed will be connected and engaged with the public, s/he will not be at the public's mercy. Too often the public philosopher has to be the critic, the dissenter, the bearer of unwelcome news. Remember we are talking about a diverse, open, many-fangled dialogue, not advertising.

EVEN: I can honor the process of dialogue more by way of actual face-to-face encounters than in books. Dialoguing is a method or procedure that simply reflects the human situation of personal social interaction. Rules of discourse (civility, listening as well as exhorting, admitting weakness and error, being attuned to positive sum or variable sum relationships as opposed to zero sum relationships) have to be established and enforced. I am much more doubtful and suspicious of presumed substantive end goals. In our practice of law today and in our democracy, we respect due process first and foremost, since when it comes to conflicting values we cannot terminate this substantive conflict without violating someone's rights.

ODD: Dialoguing is not just a method or procedure. It is an end in itself, if it is true that we all have a rational, social nature that requires development and exercise by way of dynamic conversation. Dialogue is pragmatic not utopian. Sure, the best dialogues may be quite extemporaneous and personal, but the habit of dialogue and the rigors of written dialogue are best instilled when books are dialogic and not just monologic. Too much of our lifeless (and frequently dumbed down) education is by way of monologic textbooks. Our young people deserve much better.

In the end and beyond the wordiness of dialoguing there is the silence that passeth all understanding, beyond which, but from which, dialogue proceeds. This is not the same as silencing anyone; rather it means listening to that silence, as if hearing the birdsong through all the din and clatter of our industrial human contrivances. *Anamnesis*. We hear, we remember, we see. Thus, we

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have the experience of knowing far more than we ever knew or imagined we knew. Such a pathos or receptivity to learning is a mighty radical challenge to prevailing human conventions, and yet it is antithetical to the constructivist stance of willful (define-everything) radical projects. There is this community of humanity that Promethean impulses cannot find any substitute for.

EVEN: Your mysticism of silence seems a very odd way to have the last word bringing our dialoguing to a close.

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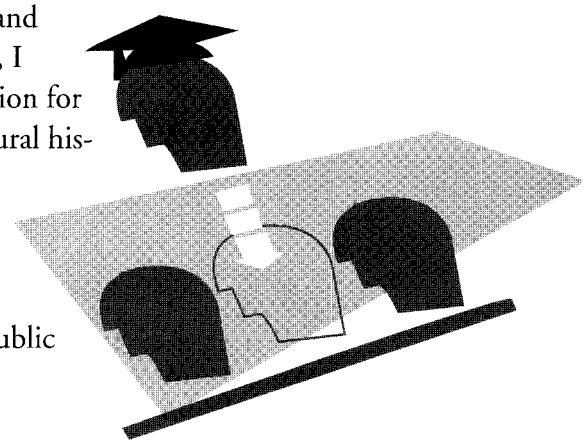
PROLES, ENTREPRENEURS, OR PUBLIC SCHOLARS?

By Mary B. Stanley

This January as I was preparing to write this piece, I was delighted to discover that Gary Trudeau was rerunning as a "Doonesbury" flashback, his series on the state of working conditions in higher education. Few faculty who saw the series can forget the strip where faculty are positioned as migrant day laborers, waiting to hop on the back of an open truck while a bull-horned dean, "boss man," calls out needed academic specialties to the response of "I'll work for food." Seeing it again I was reminded that a good political cartoonist (in my community the morning paper runs "Doonesbury" on its editorial page) is among the best public scholars we have. Indeed, I thought that my entire article could be a commentary on Trudeau's strips on the state of higher education.

Instead, as an introduction to my argument, I will begin by unpacking one aspect of that series, Trudeau's depiction of faculty as increasingly being treated as serfs. I'll leave most of the academic turf explored by Trudeau untouched.

My argument is fairly simple. I am claiming that because of institutional and macroeconomic changes, faculty in higher education are positioned either to fall into the category of what Marx termed the proletariat or to rise (although some would say also fall) into that of entrepreneur. This is in part the result of the increasing inability of faculty in the academic disciplines to use the logic, rhetoric, and practices of professional expertise to maintain autonomy over the conditions and ends of their labor. And, finally, I will argue that the default position for faculty at this point in our cultural history (although some, including myself, would say the preferred and actively sought alternative) is to reenter public space and reconnect with the public as public scholars.



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Serfs and Proles

Although serfs conjure up images of feudal and the proletariat capitalist exploitation, serf and proletariat are similar in that both are assumed to be acting not for their own purposes and ends, but at the will of another. Serfs may have had their feast days and folkways, the proletariat their glimmers of solidarity but few in 1998 would celebrate the status of, or seek work that signifies membership in either. No one eagerly takes the "road to serfdom" nor wants a job defined as working for chump change or for idiots. And yet the conditions of work in 1998 present many people with proletarian powerlessness untempered by older notions of feudal obligation, e.g., residual welfare capitalist assumptions regarding loyal workers, security of work, pension commitments, and company towns. Further, now that we have also rejected the serfdom of state welfare — for those on the Right the manor without the tilled fields — we have created the conditions of an increasingly "free" labor that by virtue of its individualism, precariousness, and isolation seems incapable of creating community, collective resistance, or even perhaps public life.

The only alternative vision of work popularly available remains the carrot of capitalism. This vision is found in the assurance that we can all become individual entrepreneurs and even, having been told that we must now "build our own rocks," finance capitalists. Serfdom of several sorts is no longer an option. Nor does professional status necessarily guarantee dignified, stable work or autonomy regarding the purpose of one's labor. Becoming an entrepreneur, an "independent contractor," our competencies and skills seemingly upgraded daily, appears the only way out and up. We had better retool, innovate, and self-capitalize.

The specter of a vast army of downsized, temporary, part-time, outsourced "individual contractors" waiting to jump onto the flatbed truck is enough to discipline even the most critical and thoughtful worker. Regardless of economic indicators, changes in the underlying social contract between workers and management, citizens and politicians, citizens and citizens, professionals and client/consumers are interpreted by many people as meaning that they are on their own.

So what of the Trudeau strips on higher education? First, I would disagree with Trudeau that the term for faculty under present conditions is, as he uses in the strip, "serfs." Migrant labor-

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ers, yes, but not serfs. Serfs at least were presumed to be part of a nexus of medieval obligation and reciprocity. Yes, they were terribly exploited and involuntarily wedded to the land, hardly a model of the good life as we conceive it now, but they did have a secure place in the social order. They were not rootless, ready to leave kin and community to keep pace with a "no guarantees" labor market.

I think the more accurate reading of Trudeau would be to say that he is presenting faculty as "proles." Regardless of the term he uses, faculty are shown as sharing the same fate as all marginally employed people in a capitalist order. For faculty in higher education it is a grim vision of a future where faculty wander outside community and institutional/disciplinary hometowns, funny but chilling.

However, and here is the rub, for those not in higher education, an unsympathetic reading of faculty's fate in the Trudeau strip would be that finally even faculty, those cosseted, narcissistic, jargon-making hothouse woolly heads will have to face the discipline of the new global market, the "you're on your own" world, without the buffer of tenure.

The resentment against tenure is not surprising. To many people, faculty members and welfare moms may well appear to share the same self-indulgent life-style. To them welfare mothers presume that they can define the nature of their labor, e.g., they bear and raise children at will. Supposedly such welfare recipients, unlike most wage workers, also decide for themselves the conditions of that work, stereotypically filling their days with soap operas, steaks, and drugs/liquor. And of course "we" subsidized them to do it.

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Ditto faculty, with appropriate substitutions, e.g., opera for soap operas, filet mignon with béarnaise sauce on research junkets for steak on food stamps, and fine Merlots as against beer and corner drugs. Unlike the near inhuman status of feudal serfs, today's coddled serfs, so the argument goes, become "welfare queens" and cultural prima donnas (a.k.a. tenured faculty) while the rest of the working world has to scramble so as not to tumble into the reserve army of the partially or temporarily employed. It follows to many that both welfare *and* tenure should be eliminated. Everyone should stand equally unprotected until the market reveals her or his worth.

Furthermore, in a society where education — and reeducation/retraining forever and ever, amen — is being sold as the

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magic bullet that will empower individuals to slay the dragon of an unpredictable and seemingly ever-changing labor market, it is not surprising that the conveyors of that magic will increasingly be found wanting. Education in a liberal capitalist society has long been the device to square the circle in an economic order that suspiciously seems to guarantee perpetual privilege to some sectors of society or to a few parvenu "winners," while most people feel the bounce and sway of capitalism's creative destruction and attendant class inequality. It might be noted that President Clinton's State of the Union message included a straightforward reiteration of education as the magic bullet in a global economy theme. What was notable was his total silence regarding what other ends education might serve.

Adding insult to injury is the thought that those same tenured faculty have the authority to sign off on or certify our newly acquired skills. Further annoying is the awareness that the acquisition of those skills and knowledge was not for its own sake or that of the student but to provide that modicum of illusive security in an ever-changeable job market. And finally, perhaps most annoying, is that in higher education and perhaps increasingly at lower levels as well, you have to pay top dollar to acquire those skills *and* seemingly be bored to death in the process.

It is not surprising then that the 1997 annual survey of college freshmen reveals that almost 75 percent of college freshmen chose being financially well-off as the essential goal of their education as against using education to develop a philosophy of life. The reverse of three decades ago. Not surprising as well that students who claimed to have been frequently bored in class in high school hit a record high of 36 percent. Yet in spite of a legacy of boredom with education, a record high percentage of students also said they aspire to receive a master's degree.

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Education as means and not end does not bode well for its providers. And yet there is an irony regarding the very authority of faculty to certify. In the effort to professionalize the mind and certify knowledge, faculty in higher education may have inadvertently undermined the very idea of education as a transcendent public value, a good in itself broadly valued and needed in a democracy, not simply a commodity with an unproven track record or a rarefied gift that few students recognize. In a capitalist society, the very process of professionalizing the mind created a barrier against

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the proletarianization of faculty. The effort to dignify the labor of scholars and to create a community of critical inquiry free from political and market pressures may have had unintended consequences but it was a worthy goal.

Solidarity has been used by both workers and those aspiring to the middle class to create conditions of stable dignified work. For working people, unions came to institutionalize this quest for fair treatment, just compensation, and collective control over the conditions of labor. For the middle class and those aspiring to become middle class, professionalism has been a preferred strategy. Notwithstanding efforts at unionization, faculty in higher education have taken the professionalization route.

The question is whether professionalism in the present institutional and macroeconomic context is able to sustain this autonomy. I believe that it cannot. The project of professionalization has always been difficult. The logic of capitalism is both in theory antimonopolistic (anyone should be able to practice, let the buyer beware) and in practice forever seeking to deskill or replace workers with smart machines or other laborsaving processes including relocating production outside the United States and buying cheap "brain power" abroad regardless of attempts by professional organizations and professionals to monopolize or certify expertise.

At present, market values are increasingly dominant in all areas of life and in all institutional sectors. Professionals, particularly faculty in higher education, need allies in the project of using democratic traditions, values, and practices to challenge, limit, and restore the balance between the capitalist and democratic dimensions of our political culture both for their own sakes as dignified workers but also to restore substance to our collective democratic aspirations.

Academic Capitalism: Faculty as Entrepreneurs

Sheila Slaughter and Larry L. Leslie in their newly published work *Academic Capitalism: Politics, Policies, and the Entrepreneurial University,* (Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore, 1997) argue that many faculty from 1980 on have, for a variety of reasons, joined the charge into the marketplace. The authors' research in four countries (Canada, Great Britain, Australia, and the United States) reveals the impact of commercial values on academic life. Administrators, particularly in public institutions facing retrench-

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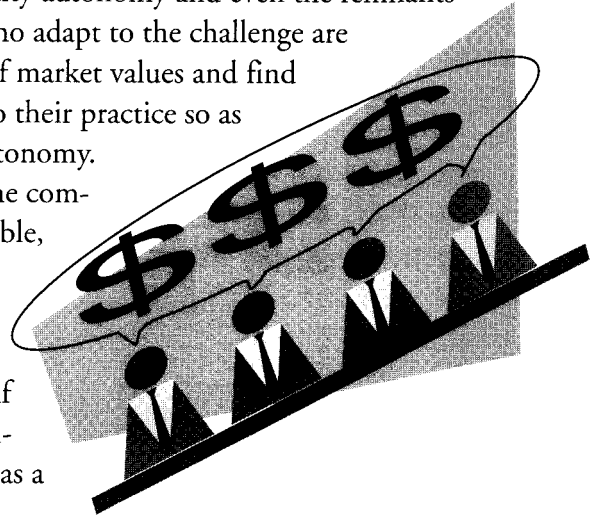
ment in public funding, have been forced to rely on increased tuition (fostering the shift from student as student to student as consumer), closer linkages with commerce and industry for purposes of "training" their work force, and/or the encouragement of faculty pursuit of basic or applied research, often in partnership with commercial interests, which might generate revenue or result in marketable products and patents. The authors claim that the combined impacts of the above are transforming internal governance, disciplinary autonomy, undergraduate and graduate teaching, the nature of "truth seeking," the distinction between basic and applied research, the nature of the academic community, the purposes and values of higher education, the stratification of institutions of higher education, and the relationship between the liberal arts and professional schools. In short, they affect almost every aspect of academic life.

Some faculty easily snap to market values like iron filings to a magnet. Resistance is hard. By citing Slaughter and Leslie, I am not implying that there was a golden age (except maybe the earliest years of Harvard!) when higher education was purely about the disinterested pursuit of public service and truth. Indeed by the turn of the century, critics of higher education, such as Thorstein Veblen and Upton Sinclair, frequently linked its corruptions to its presumed dominance by commercial values. The question is, Are there limits to such dominance?

Slaughter and Leslie include in their analysis, best and worst cases. There is room for faculty autonomy and even the remnants of the liberal arts. Faculty who adapt to the challenge are those who accept the logic of market values and find ways to adapt those values to their practice so as to restore some degree of autonomy. Faculty must learn to play the commercial game, to sit at the table, so to speak, and accept that faculty research may have to adjust to commercial realities while maintaining (if lucky and if at the right institution) university affiliation as a break against the contingent work force and time limited projects colonizing the world of pro-



"Faculty must learn to play the commercial game."

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fessional work beyond the academy.

Slaughter and Leslie conclude their work with a series of recommendations. They are not the ones I would choose. Their goal seems to be to find mechanisms to empower students as consumers so that they are not shortchanged as faculty rush to those research-oriented institutes and centers where the pay is high and teaching loads limited. They do tip their hat to democratic values that might be compromised as institutional governance accommodates to an increasingly commercial environment and suggest that there might be ways to enhance those academic projects that relate to the public and public services. However, they are not concerned with the role of faculty as public scholars, engaging the public in a conversation concerning the role of higher education in a democracy or indeed engaging the public in a conversation about the very macroeconomic forces and processes they track and study.

Public Scholars: Another Possibility

The nature of the relationship between the "ivory tower" and the larger commonwealth remains contested. If market values, assumptions, and practices have come to dominate all institutions, including higher education, what role have academics played in furthering them or at least not resisting the triumph of the market as the public philosophy of our times? Russell Jacoby in his 1987 work, *The Last Intellectuals: American Culture in the Age of Academe,* argues that from the sixties on academics themselves retreated from public space, abandoning a culture that might have qualified the ascendance of market thinking and discourse. Happily mired in professional rituals, practices, and status making, contemporary academics have ceased to cultivate a conversation with the public that Jacoby claims earlier intellectuals understood to be at the heart of the arts and science professions in a democracy. Further, although many contemporary academics were, and are, infused with theoretical and emotional distaste for market values and ideology, indeed challenge(d) the very dominance of both, to Jacoby they sang to their own choirs and preached to their own converts, never deeply engaging the public in fundamental constitutive conversations about the economy, society, or politics and policy. Although Jacoby's book is now 11 years old, I doubt he would

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be surprised by the transformations in higher education described by Slaughter and Leslie.

The professionalization project including the hyperspecialization discussed by Jacoby is not fundamentally a democratic project. Obviously, one aspect of academic professionalization was, and continues to be, to undermine popular confidence in the "lay" mind through the creation of professional status and a monopoly of expertise. Particularly now when even professional expertise quickly loses its cachet, the intellectual professions may find it ever more important to nurture the belief that knowledge work is hard, unsuitable, or genetically impossible for the masses and should therefore be baptized with whatever power and privilege still remains attached to the concept of expertise.

Jacoby knows that the project of intellectual criticism, the hard work of making a public case against a powerful political and economic order is not easy. He is fully aware that the costs for academics have always been high and that professionalization allows(ed) one the space to be as critical and truth-seeking as is (was) possible. Jacoby writing 11 years ago did not perhaps recognize that the challenge to tenure, shifts in resource allocation, and the increasing dominance of commercial values in higher education would shrink that space considerably. Today's "tenured radicals," so maligned by the cultural right, may well be the last unusually privileged cohort of academics before faculty become the contingent work force of the university of the future.

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How then to constitute that conversation with the public, which might contribute to the democracy project *and* save the truth-seeking humanistic tradition that some at least have found an essential and irreplaceable component of higher education? How to reimagine tenure as the prerequisite for both truth-seeking *and* truth-speaking as well as a model of secure, dignified employment?

Faculty in higher education are socially, politically, and economically situated such that they must as individuals, and perhaps collectively as well, take a stand on the nature and future of academic life. The positions available to faculty are shaped by the vast structural changes that accompany late capitalism. The one most feared is perhaps that of faculty as a powerless, contingent work force; experts without power, position, or security of

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tenure, always on the move, their competencies on their backs and in their laptops; competencies quickly outmoded.

Another option, faculty as entrepreneurs, may seem to many to be exciting. Perhaps young people presently embarking on a career in the academic professions and socialized to market values without the buffer of older traditions of learning might come to view tenure as indeed breeding dependency, sloth, and decadency if not simply generative of much deadwood. Ambition and competition have always been part of professional life in the United States. The professional ethos of service and altruism may be transformed by a cash-value, bottom-line view of knowledge.

This is not to say the liberal arts tradition will disappear. It may morph from a view of itself as the repository of humane aspirations, continually revitalizing democracy, into a vision of the liberal arts as fully compatible with the trends discussed above. As Slaughter and Leslie argue, the sciences are being pulled ever more tightly into the circle of commercial values and practices. As for the humanities, they may increasingly be perceived as good "training" for participation in high-quality leisure activities. In a culturally ironic age, the humanities provide a deep reservoir of sophisticated in-group images and allusions shared among those employed in hip, esthetically driven industries such as infotainment, pop art/culture and advertising/public relations. Cultural manipulation will surely be a growth industry and those who presently labor in that shop are already accustomed to flexible and fluid working conditions. There have always been aspects of higher education that were more resonant with the maintenance of a cultural elite and the commodification of culture than with the democratization of that culture.

And the social sciences? The state's continual interest in social control (the boom in criminology majors at the undergraduate level cannot be ignored) and the corporate need for ever more sophisticated models for how to manage a fragmented, anomic, multicultural, and global work force suggest that the social sciences will have a role in academic capitalism. Further the social sciences, as the humanities, are even now contributing theoretical orientations and methodological sophistication to the project of capital (dis)investment, risk analysis, and cultural commodification.

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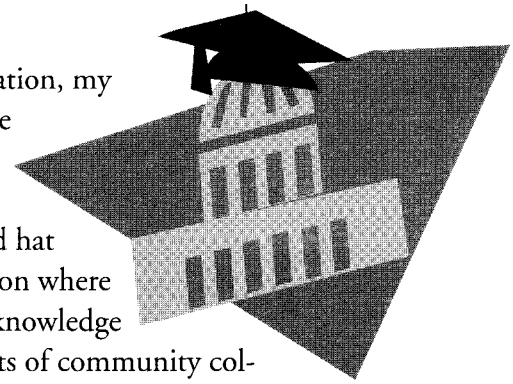

For some in higher education, my implied concerns regarding the impact of a globalized economy and market values on higher education are either old hat or a great comfort depending on where one labors in the vineyard of knowledge workers. Faculty and presidents of community colleges and midrange four-year or research institutions may well believe that their institutions *have* engaged the public when they provide those skill-based courses and curricula that seem responsive to the demands of the labor market or collaborate with the business sector to provide a vision of their surrounding community attuned to business concerns and enticing to investment capital. The "forces" of global capitalism can easily become like the weather, something communities and institutions must accept and accommodate to rather than critically assess, challenge, or help constitute. In this regard, I have used the term market values rather than market "forces" throughout this paper because I am making an argument for thinking of the economy not as something outside the agency and normative order of human beings. From my perspective it is not a force of nature like thunderclouds in the distance. Rather, a market economy is constituted by human beings through political processes and sustained or resisted through the daily practices and values of institutions. For those in higher education, a fundamentally democratic and constitutive question such as, What is an economy for? may not be asked by communities who have adopted a view of a market economy as essentially functioning separate from political life. Nor will faculty who ask such questions be viewed as allies or friends if the language of the market, as against the older language of political economy, becomes the only discourse of public imagination.

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On the other hand, elite research institutions may well have cadres of faculty asking profound questions of deep public concern. However, faculty and administrators may avoid engagement with the public for a variety of reasons. The fear of compromising the integrity of frontier research that would be required by the effort to translate it for the layperson, the honest concern that faculty expertise will swamp tentative efforts on the part of citizens to

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participate in public reflection and action, the concern that the deal struck with the public in the professionalization contract (we will not use our expertise outside carefully circumscribed professional limits because you, the public, may not be able to judge the veracity of our claims) might be broken, and the general academic disposition to avoid contaminating theory with practice, all may work against faculty engaging the public.

Yet, there are faculty who believe in the role of public intellectual and there are administrators who may wish they could transcend the tedium of Total Quality Management (TQM) with its interminable meetings, assessment models more appropriate to product standardization than student transformation, and budgeting practices more suitable to corporate divisions than academic departments and schools.

All faculty are citizens with a dual calling, one to their academic profession, the other to the democratic polity within which they labor. As such, they are public scholars whether they like it or not. It was the democratic project after all, begun in conversations between enlightenment elites and regular citizens, that justified a revolution and ultimately made space for the clash of ideas and the pursuit of truth. In time, that same combination of grassroot theorizing and action plus "high" ideas opened up public space for women, African-Americans, working people, and even those in poverty.

To defend their autonomy as critical thinkers, faculty must convince the public that critical inquiry is a common democratic practice not a rarefied skill, and that critical inquiry, as against training for the new global employment market, is a significant part of the mission of higher education and a self-renewing gift to the polity.

This task may not be as difficult as it seems. For one thing, the public is out there already. At times it is more shaped and obvious than at other times but it is ever ready to talk. Without a belief in a competent public prepared to be engaged, our jury system would be both impossible and illegitimate as a vehicle of justice. Furthermore, the public is composed of individuals who are already theorizing and grappling with the complexity of social, economic, and community life. Everyone, to some degree, must theorize if only to make sense out of daily experi-

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ence. If market values and institutions finally do swamp democratic values and practices, providing the only model of self, society, state, and good life available to people, all that energy and brain power will be spent strategizing about individual stock portfolios, choosing among ever more confusing commodities (selecting telephone service, banks, and health care already takes up a good portion of the active mind) and escaping from collective responsibility into private enclaves.

In short, the public needs allies to help them resist what they already know to be an incomplete picture of the human condition and the human soul. Where better to find such allies than among those who, at some point, embraced a tradition more complex and richer than our present commercial culture seems to provide?

Faculty working in the fields of service-learning and action research have already attempted to build such alliances with the public. Both service-learning and action research have enlivened the debate over the proper role of scholars in a democracy. Both have called into question the self-evident nature of "objectivity" and the meaning of research, ideas, and scholarship in democratic life. Both are easily pulled into the marketplace. Service-learning is institutionally supported if it helps students get jobs. Action research seems fine in a business school.

Conclusion

Faculty cannot ignore the possibility that market values and practices are reflective of an ideological orientation ever more swiftly marching toward Zion. What better way for academics to convince the public that the crisis of higher education is more than simply its cost to individual families, than to remind them of the democratic ideals faculty share with them: the desire for decent, stable work, a collective commitment to creating the material conditions for a flourishing life for all citizens, a serious inquiry into the limits and benefits of the market, a sense of community and belonging that places citizens in time and space, an understanding of civic rights and responsibilities that is based on a thoughtful analysis of the tensions between human agency and social structure, a fundamental sense of fair play and decency, the belief that regular citizens have the capacity for self-governance?

Students themselves are ready for such a conversation. This March, college students across the United States and Canada held

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"teach-ins" that aimed "to challenge the increasing involvement of corporations in higher education."

Democratic values make certain demands on individuals and institutions just as commercial/market ones do. As deeply as we are members of a capitalist society, we are members of a democratic polity that is not finally reducible to market values. The democratic disposition and values have served academics well as long as academics have served and nurtured them in turn. Nurtured them in their students, in their skeptical stance toward truth, in the pleasure they have taken in their use of the mind, in the myth and sometimes reality, of community and collegiality. Every academic must confront the impact of market ideology on their thought, their practice, and the future of the academic professions. I hardly think the danger right now is that such reflection and concomitant action will lead to Soviet-style science or socialist realism in art. Rather, it might lead to a democracy a little bit more worthy of its espoused ideals. Whether all academics become in part public scholars or some academics begin to develop an expertise in this new role, developing a theoretical understanding of what functions such an office might actually entail, can only be guessed. There may well be faculty whose practice already places them in the category of public scholar. My preference is that all academics, indeed all intellectuals, wherever they are, in taxicabs or at Harvard, ask what democracy demands of those who decide, to use that quaint old phrase, to pursue the life of the mind.

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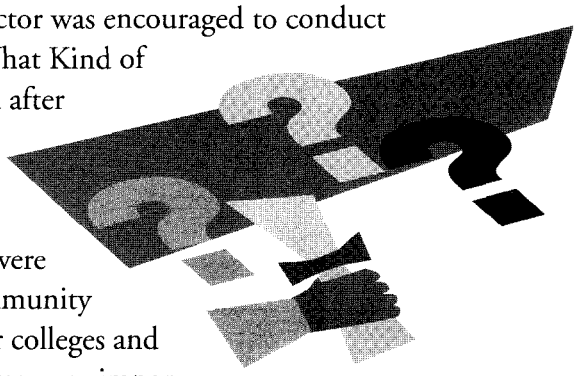
HIGHER EDUCATION: TEACHING AND THE DELIBERATIVE PROCESS

By Susanna Finnell

You may recall the Pew Charitable Trust's report, "Dancing with Change." That report caught many of us at the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) off guard with its strident accusation that higher education was out of touch with the needs of corporate America. It prompted us to look inward. How could we be so wrong? Why was the public so dissatisfied with higher education?

The Kettering Foundation, the National Issues Forums concept, and Bill Gwin's leadership led to a series of conversations with the public to explore issues of higher education. Our goal was not to promote a particular point of view, but to give people an opportunity to deliberate on the subject.

Every Honors director was encouraged to conduct forums on the topic "What Kind of Education Do We Need after High School?" Nearly 700 people took part in the forum series. Three-fourths of them were Honors students at community colleges and at four-year colleges and universities. These forums were important in themselves because they allowed people to formulate more informed opinions on this topic. Collectively, however, the forums gave NCHC the raw material to produce a report, published in September, that offers insight into public attitudes toward higher education.



What were the results of these conversations? The participants agreed on several important points:

1. Higher education in the U.S. must achieve two seemingly

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contradictory goals: prepare students for the workplace and lay the groundwork for employment, but also prepare them to be lifelong learners.

2. Most participants agreed that the country's higher education system is doing an excellent job, even though they see a need for significant changes. Many felt that K-12 education is not working nearly as well as higher education. No one, however, thought that K-12 would be improved by shifting money from higher education to K-12.

3. To these participants, higher education did not necessarily mean a four-year college degree. Students, they said, can profit from many kinds of institutions, including community colleges and specialized technical schools.

4. They were keenly aware that higher education is increasingly essential for people to be competitive economically. Without it, students will find it more and more difficult to earn a decent living and our country will be hard-pressed to compete in a global economy.

5. After deliberation, the participants were more likely to see value in the liberal arts, and felt that higher education, especially at a four-year college, should be education "for a lifetime" rather than just training for employment in a specific line of work. This, to me, was a most welcome surprise.

Many people made this report possible: Bill Gwin, Bill Mech and the analysts at Boise State, Doble Research and, of course, the National Issues Forums folks, as well as the Kettering Foundation. I can claim credit for this work only as a facilitator. But as president, I have a duty to suggest what it all means.

"This report represents an emerging voice that is the result of public thinking."

First, the results are important in themselves. This report represents an emerging voice that is the result of public thinking. It is neither a poll nor a survey, but something nuanced and more complex. It comes out of deliberate thinking about the purposes of higher education. It can help administrators, legislators, and policymakers alike to rethink how higher education might truly serve students better.

In the last few years, the image of higher education has taken a beating and many universities have experienced hard times.

Budgets have been cut. Courses have been canceled. Programs eliminated. Buildings and classrooms have suffered. Most of us had very little or no salary increases for several years in a row.

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These lean years were, especially in public universities, a result of state budget pressures. Expenditures for prisons, health care, and education had to compete with each other in a climate of shrinking resources. It was easy to blame higher education when our graduates were not finding work. The thought that corporate downsizing might have something to do with the shrinking graduate job market did not seem to occur to people.

Now, with corporate culture needing to replenish the work force, the job market for our graduates is phenomenal. Students are getting hired before they graduate.

Legislators had to make tough budget decisions in the last ten years. It was easy to target higher education. Much of the soul-searching that ensued, and many of our adjustments, were positive. It was high time that higher education — especially public higher education — redefine its role and become accountable to the public.

But those legislators who said they represented the public and its dissatisfaction may have based their views more on expedience than on actual public opinion. The public at large may never have been consulted in a meaningful way.

Second, and more important, this report gives us a legitimate voice among other professionals in higher education. Never before in NCHC history have we been in a position to speak on behalf of the public.

". . . this report gives us a legitimate voice among other professionals in higher education."

Last fall, on September 10, the NCHC participated in a press conference at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. Education writers picked up our report. Our findings are having an impact on what they write.

On the same day, representatives of the National Collegiate Honors Council also met with people from many other higher education organizations to share these results. The organizations included the American Association of Universities, the American Association of Community Colleges, the College Board, the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, the American Association of University Women, the National Association of Student Personnel Professionals, the Educational Testing Service, the Coalition for Student Loan Reform, and the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education. This give-and-take around one table was a watershed event in our history.

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Education, Excellence, and Democracy

As described in Susanna Finnell's Presidential Address, the original Kettering Foundation-National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) partnership not only contributed significantly to national deliberation on higher education, it helped many in Honors reflect more deeply on the relationship between Honors and larger public issues. The issue booklet, Preparing for a Good Future: What Kind of Education Do We Need after High School? *prepared under the leadership of Bill Gwin, has inspired several ideas for exciting new directions for the Kettering-NCHC partnership. I am pleased to be involved in one of these new projects and to have the opportunity to say something about it here.*

With a working title of "Education, Excellence, and Democracy," the preliminary framing for this new project presents four choices, four different models of the correct role for Honors in higher education: 1. Selecting and Training Professional Leaders, 2. Developing Responsible Citizens, 3. Reviving Moral Authority, and 4. Realizing Fair Opportunities for All. Such important recent works as Allan Bloom's The Closing of the American Mind, *and Benjamin Barber's* An Aristocracy of Everyone *have contributed to this framing. So have many articles in Honors publications and countless conversations at Honors meetings over the years. As a starting point, the framing has the virtue of combining philosophical breadth and depth with practical immediacy.*

The philosophical dimension lies in the links between competing notions of educational excellence and competing visions of democracy, a crucial issue in American education at all levels. With another NIF issue booklet Governing America, *in mind, we might say our issue is, What kinds of educational excellence would help address the current failure of American democracy? In other words, though this issue focuses on educational quality, a defining concern of Honors programs, its purview actually extends as far as the society's concern for excellence and democracy.*

The practical immediacy of the framing for those in Honors lies in its direct relevance to the day-to-day operation of Honors programs and of the NCHC. Questions of how to define and pursue excellence are at the root of all programmatic decisions in Honors. Whose excellence and what kind of excellence should come first? What should the priorities of a program be? Of course these practical decisions are faced in elementary and secondary schools as much as in colleges, community arts programs, and community hospitals. Wherever organizations have the public's business as part of their business, the issue of excellence and democracy matters.

One of the unique strengths of this project, I believe, will be its ability to link, for many of the participants in deliberations, broad philosophical issues with pressing practical matters about which they will actually have to decide. While Hannah Arendt certainly illuminated the idea of the public by means of a hard and fast dichotomy between the public world, on the one hand, and society and community on the other, there are good reasons for seeing the matter differently. Arendt's notion of public space becomes a

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kind of ideal type used to illuminate the dimension of publicness and public work in a wide variety of deliberative groups, even including those enmeshed in social and economic activities. Recognizing and cultivating these dimensions of publicness are important because doing so fosters and supports the capacity of citizens for public work wherever they are. Furthermore, such deliberations can publicize the work of the organization so as to enrich the truly public work of the larger community. Certainly a democratic polity requires these sorts of mutually reinforcing relationships between its public and civil lives.

The first implementation of our preliminary framing will be at the annual retreat of the NCHC executive council this spring. For this deliberation, the framing will focus on the priorities of Honors programs and of the NCHC in relation to basic assumptions about educational excellence and democracy. Immediately following the retreat, deliberations will continue via a specially created listserv accessible through the Internet. For this electronic deliberation, the focus of the preliminary framing will be broadened to include issues of educational excellence at all levels. Thus, such currently controversial topics as inclusion, tracking, mainstreaming, school finance, cultural literacy, multiculturalism, charter schools, and vouchers will be brought into the deliberations — all of them related to the broad issue of educational excellence and democracy. And given the broad applicability of this issue to organizational practice, efforts will be made to involve diverse groups and organizations in the deliberations, from school boards to arts administrators, and from parent-teacher organizations to social service agencies.

Because the National Issues Forums format is based on a model of democratic deliberation, use of that format within organizations like the NCHC that strive for democracy may well contribute to a renewed and strengthened ability to act. Through the power of deliberations to explore underlying values and to examine realistically the costs and benefits of policies, an "organization forum" may generate a deeper and more nuanced understanding of organizational common ground, leading to strengthened institutional voice and action. With these possibilities in mind, we will be looking for opportunities to conduct forums in the widest possible variety of settings: at in-service programs for teachers, in high school classes, on colleges campuses, and at meetings of national educational, arts, social service, and community development organizations.

Beyond the expectation that a new issue booklet will eventually result and that framing deliberations will be conducted with the widest possible diversity of participants and organization settings, plans beyond this spring have not yet been finalized. As we continue to develop plans, your comments, suggestions, and offers to become involved will be eagerly welcomed. Please feel free to contact me at Honors Program, Lock Haven University, Lock Haven, PA 17745, 717-893-2491 (jknauer@eagle.lhup.edu).

By Jim Knauer

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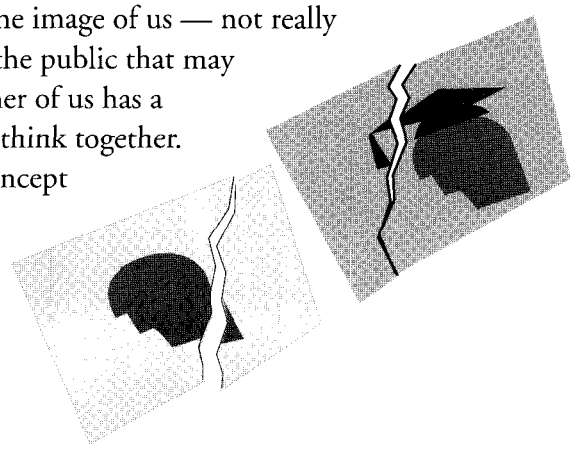
". . . our findings indicate that the public's concern is not primarily about cost, but about the nature of education itself."

Within the same week, the report was distributed to a congressional committee on the National Commission on the Cost of Higher Education. Although our report does not directly address issues of cost, our findings indicate that the public's concern is not primarily about cost, but about the nature of education itself — that is, "What kind of education do we need?"

The Kettering Foundation mailed the report, with a detailed, explanatory letter, to the Secretary of Education, Richard Riley. I quote from that letter: "This project, which promises to continue over several years, marks the beginning of a very different dialogue between people within educational institutions and the rest of the citizenry. This has interesting implications at a time when higher education is being challenged to justify what it does."

It is important that we understand the significance of these events — the confluence of forces that will lead us into the next century stronger than we have ever been. We may feel a tendency at this point to sit back, pat ourselves on the back, and let it go at that. We had our day in the sun, our 15 minutes of fame. Now let's get back to the business we know best — running our Honors programs and working with our students.

I challenge you to see the possibilities in what has just happened. More significant than the report itself — it is, after all, a snapshot in time that quickly becomes old news — is the fact that we have incorporated a revolutionary tool into our Honors world — the tool of deliberation. It is not that foreign to our philosophy of teaching and learning, which we see as intertwined and complementary. Just think what we have accomplished with this tool: higher education is grappling with how to define itself to the public at large. The public has one image of us — not really accurate. We have a view of the public that may well be equally flawed. Neither of us has a good handle on how we can think together.



This tool, the forum concept of public deliberation on issues that are indeed public and important, may be the key to moving our organization forward. We CAN have a direct conversation with the citizens of this country. We CAN come closer together in understanding what higher education is all about.

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Ada Long, past president of NCHC, told us two years ago in her speech, "Honors as Neighborhood," that "we can experiment with new ways of opening up our conversations, widening our loyalties, and deepening our responsibilities so that, instead of looking back to the old model of the neighborhood, we redefine our human connections in ways that cut across geography, class, and culture."

With our National Issues Forums work, we have done exactly that. We have opened up a conversation with a different culture — the public, students, parents, the community. Through this process, we have placed ourselves squarely into the issues of the day. We have begun to redress our relationship with the public. Honors, 40 years ago, was born out of a pressing public need. Today, for Honors to earn the respect of our different constituents, we may need, once more, to place ourselves into the issues as they confront us through public needs.

"We have opened up a conversation with a different culture."

There are always plenty of issues that exercise influence on us. One such issue facing us is affirmative action. Universities and colleges in California and Texas (where I work), operate under a different law from that of the rest of the country. With the Hopwood court decision and Proposition 209, they had to rethink their admissions, scholarships, and financial aid decisions virtually overnight. Twenty-seven states have referenda coming up about affirmative action. Diversity on campus and access of traditionally underrepresented groups will again become a critical issue within the next few years. With President Clinton's commission on race relations, there will be a national dialogue on this issue. I ask myself, what role, if any, can Honors play in this? Can we — should we — insert ourselves into this dialogue? If so, how would we do it? There is no doubt in my mind that this question will become urgent and will need to be addressed in creative ways. Honors will not be shielded from it.

So I ask you, as I ask myself, can we do that? If we do that, how? One of the gratifying aspects of this conference has been to see the creative energies of so many people flow into this direction. Jim Knauer and his project on public deliberation about what excellence means in higher education is one such direction. Jack Dudley from Virginia Tech is trying to organize deliberate thinking around the issue of race and Honors. Both are finding

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allies and partners. They are creating frameworks through which we can have these dialogues — it's like yeast that is added to flour and water, bubbles that will rise to the top. So I ask you again, should we do that? And I ask you to imagine all that this could mean, for each of us, for our programs, the NCHC, for the nation.

I believe, if we can in small ways incorporate public deliberation about any issue into our teaching and learning, we will be strengthening what, in the end, education in a democratic society is all about: creating citizens who practice knowing.

This article is excerpted from the National Collegiate Honors Council Presidential Address, October 25, 1997.

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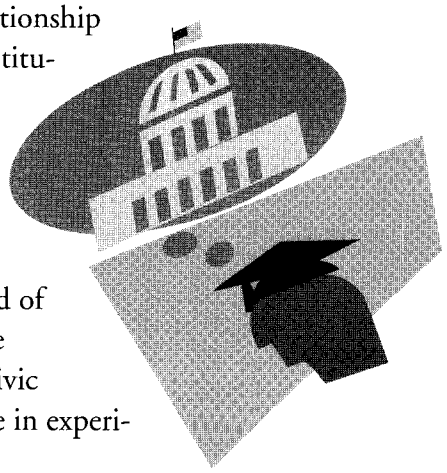
LEARNING CIVIC EFFECTIVENESS

By Robert H. McKenzie

The nature of civic learning not only demands experiential education; civic learning reinforces for us the nature of experiential education. To explore the relationship between the two, we must understand a number of factors: the nature of the contemporary challenges to civic learning; the relationship of the purposes that educational institutions choose to that civic challenge; the pedagogical choices available for learning civically; and the relationship of learning theory to the centrality of choice that lies at the core of civic learning. At the end of this investigation, we will find some important guiding principles that civic learning suggests for how we engage in experiential education.



The Civic Challenge

The challenge that deliberative pedagogy addresses is enhancing civic capacity. Contemporary involvement in politics is predominantly angrily adversarial at one extreme or alarmingly absent at the other.

These extremes stem from a common root: too often, formal political processes treat citizens as consumers. When citizens begin to see themselves as consumers rather than as owners of government, they become passive. Critics describe them as apathetic. When spurred to action, citizens too often conceive of politics simply as influencing government to achieve partisan ends. The result is often adversarial gridlock, or at best, constantly shifting policies as first one group, then another, achieves a transient 51 percent majority. This phenomenon is exacerbated by the tendency of identity politics to overshadow common work to be done.

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In recent years, citizen anger with formal processes has increased — to the point of great suspicion of, even retreat from, participation in public affairs. Alarmingly, the reaction of college-age students has been less that of anger than of disengagement. The loss of democratic memory, what it means to engage in effective public problem solving, bodes ill for the republic. For democracy to survive, citizens must realize that they have responsibilities that cannot be delegated: to establish the legitimacy of government, to provide direction for its policies, to create and sustain political will, and to evaluate the work of government and other social institutions.

The Relationship of Educational Purpose to the Civic Challenge

For a variety of reasons, a historic purpose of education — the cultivation of civic virtue and effectiveness — has atrophied. A civic purpose for curriculum pales in our time compared to emphases on purposes of fostering economic competitiveness and personal autonomy.

Competitiveness and autonomy both emphasize individualism. Experiential education should play an important role in developing the individual. But experiential education should play an important role in developing civic capacity as well. Individual competitiveness and personal autonomy and civic cooperation are all intertwined. Tensions exist among these purposes, but those tensions must be used productively.

Experiential education is particularly important to civic effectiveness. Citizens are made, not born. Citizenship, like any skill and the understanding that undergirds it, is learned by practicing. We learn to make good choices, the essence of civic effectiveness, through experiences in making choices and by reflecting on the consequences of those choices in further experiences.

In order for politics (defined as the responsibility of the *polis*, not just government) to work, citizens must be actors. To act together, citizens must make choices. To make choices, citizens must engage in deliberative dialogue across diversity, not just within their own interests. To use dialogue effectively, citizens must make public judgments and create a coherent public voice. That public voice creates common ground for complementary action. And citizens must constantly monitor their effectiveness in making

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choices and implementing them.

Pedagogical Choices for Civic Learning

If we admit civic capacity as a legitimate purpose of education, the next question is pedagogical: Where and how do students realize their responsibilities and develop the skills to exercise them? Four basic approaches are in the public mind. One is service-learning. Another is learning deliberative skills. Another is democratizing the campus. And another is providing a traditional liberal arts education. These choices are not mutually exclusive. But an examination of the pros and cons of each as a separate choice provides a deeper understanding of how they all can be formed into effective educational philosophy and practice. These choices sometimes provoke heated debate, particularly when any two are posed against one another. The pros and cons of these four choices can be quickly stated.

Advocates of service-learning believe that colleges and universities are isolated from the demands of public life. This educational isolation contributes to the lack of civic-mindedness among students. Students should have increased opportunities for involvement in the community beyond the campus. This involvement would produce a more engaged and committed citizenry. Involvement in community challenges is a powerful motivation for lifelong civic activism.

Critics of service-learning are first worried by the prospect of mandatory service requirements. Few people object to allowing students to perform voluntary service in their free time, but many critics believe it inappropriate and unnecessary for all students to meet a public service requirement. They also worry about the dangers of political activism, fearing that direct student involvement in political life hinders educational institutions from teaching subject matter in the classroom. They worry about the depth of intellectual quality in service-learning. Other critics argue a more subtle point. They are concerned that service-learning stresses therapeutic values at the expense of more fundamental civic skills.

Another basic approach is acquiring deliberative skills. Advocates of this approach believe that the current lack of commitment to our political system is the result of a failure of deliberative skills in our society. In this view, the core of public life requires individuals to struggle together with differing perspectives and priorities and then to exercise public judgment together on consistent direction for public policy. This task involves people working together to develop creative solutions and complementary actions to address common

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predicaments. Advocates of this approach sometimes charge that the popular idea of critical thinking is taught too often as an individual skill, not also as a group endeavor. They stress the need to educate students in deliberative discussion and group problem solving.

Critics of this approach believe that it puts too much stress on something that students learn to do anyway. People exercise the skills of listening and working together in their private lives without any particular practice or training. Should institutions spend precious time and resources to address these skills? Furthermore, some critics believe that deliberative problem solving assumes that everyone has an equal place in a discussion from the beginning. The deeper problems in public problem solving are often imbalances of power.

This criticism leads to a third basic approach to teaching civic skills — democratizing the campus to ensure that students understand democracy by living it. Proponents of this approach argue that colleges and universities are themselves antidemocratic, that they are hierarchical institutions that do not create an atmosphere favorable to the teaching or practice of skills necessary for citizenship. Students with little real opportunity for participation within educational institutions become graduates who are unwilling and unable to assume responsibilities in public life.

"…colleges and universities are themselves antidemocratic, they are hierarchical institutions that do not create an atmosphere favorable to the teaching or practice of skills necessary for citizenship."

The historic role of a liberal undergraduate education in producing civic virtue has been too much taken over by emphases on economic competitiveness and personal autonomy. Curriculum struggles on campuses are over these two competing objectives, not the development of capable citizens. Advocates of this approach believe that a more egalitarian, democratic community teaches democratic politics most effectively.

Critics of this option form two distinct groups. One group agrees with the need to eliminate hierarchy within colleges and universities but worries that the means proposed are inadequate. They fear elitism. They question whether including students meaningfully in institutional governance without addressing power relationships among students would really create democracy. For these critics, the race, gender, and class composition of newly empowered student leadership becomes a critical concern. A second group of critics argues that colleges and universities are not intended to be democracies at all. Students are transients. They

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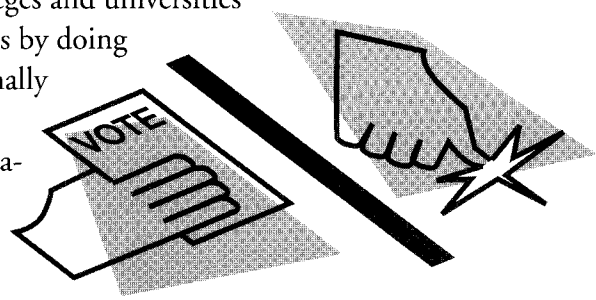
bear little responsibility for the continuing character of institutions of higher education. Empowering students to practice democracy distracts them from their intellectual purposes in the same manner as service-learning.

A fourth approach therefore is a classical academic model. Advocates often admit that there is a crisis in the political life of the United States. But colleges and universities should respond to this crisis by doing best what they are traditionally charged to do. That charge is to provide a quality education in both the broad areas of the liberal arts and the professions chosen by individual students. Effective practice of politics in a democracy depends on a thoughtful public and well-trained leaders. These resources come from an intellectually rigorous education.



Critics of this approach argue that it is far too narrow. They believe it is elitist and does not represent citizenship education at all. By overly stressing traditional notions about leadership, this approach leaves those outside of formal leadership positions with nothing to do or to contribute. The problem is made worse by overspecialization within traditional academic departments. The technical emphases and jargon common to academic discourse are difficult to relate to public decision making. Ironically, these problems are often most acute in political science and political theory, the disciplines that should be most relevant to public life. Critics also argue that it is naive to believe that simply being smart or well-educated makes a good citizen any more than these characteristics are enough to make a good doctor. This view believes it dangerous to assume that a purely curricular approach to civic learning produces moral agents. Producing good citizens requires more than academic rigor.

As this brief discussion suggests, each of these basic approaches has strengths and weaknesses. Obviously, no one of these approaches alone is sufficient for the task of building citizenship. Each institution and program of higher education must examine itself and its environment carefully to determine how best to address the need for new civic ideals. How is such a choice made?

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The Centrality of Choice

The quintessential political act in an effective democracy is making an intelligent choice. Just as institutions make choices about their best approaches, citizens must make choices about life together as a public. We learn to make better choices by making choices, experiencing their consequences, learning from them, and applying that learning to new choices. In a democracy, those choices are not only individual, they are collective. Unless one continues an assumption rooted in an always open frontier that collective good results from the sum of individual choices, a primary challenge for developing effective democracy is learning how to make choices that affect everyone *with* others, not *to* others, *nor over* others. This learning together from our choices is how the public learns the public's business.

Choice and Learning Theory

Veterans of experiential education quickly see in the preceding section the elements of a familiar cycle of learning articulated by David Kolb: experience, reflection, conceptualization, and application or experimentation.

When we examine the four basic choices for developing civic effectiveness, we are actually deliberating the strengths and weaknesses of emphasizing any one particular phase of a learning cycle. In this sense, deliberation is the way in which citizens collectively reflect on their varied grasps of reality. Individual grasp of reality is derived from personal experiences and from ideas about those experiences derived from personal reflection and from the observations of others (from the ancients through history to contemporaries) about the meaning of similar experiences over time. In making collective decisions, these individual grasps of reality must be brought into juxtaposition with one another. The next two paragraphs are a somewhat oversimplified but useful-for-thinking formulation.

Service-learning is immersion in concrete experience. A classical curriculum is immersion in conceptualizations about experience. Arguments between these two approaches are arguments about preferred ways of grasping reality. Since reality is grasped in both ways, arguments between the two approaches are often simplistic. The question to be answered is not which is best but how are they best integrated.

Similarly, democratizing a campus is immersion in experimentation, bringing experience (the essence of service-learning) into

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constant juxtaposition with the most useful ideas (the essence of a classical curriculum) through intensive application. It is a means of transforming grasp of reality to personal and collective use.

And teaching deliberative skills is immersion in the reflective process that weighs reality and judges the effect of applications of past judgment about the meaning of that reality. The element of judgment converts deliberation from mere speculation about meaning. Deliberation aims at application. The word literally means "to weigh." Deliberation compares multiple experiences and ideas about experiences (together the record of past experimentation); weighs their advantages, disadvantages, and trade-offs; and forms a judgment about an idea for future applications and how to implement them.

Deliberation is that phase of the learning cycle that makes the other phases work effectively. It applies judgment to imagination and in the process creates the political will or courage to undertake change. Therefore, developing deliberative skills is a key pedagogical question.

"Deliberation is that phase of the learning cycle that makes the other phases work effectively."

Deliberation is learned experientially. Deliberation is a natural act. People make decisions, personally and collectively, by deliberating at various levels of effectiveness. But, people have difficulty transferring deliberative skills to arenas that are described to them as, or which they perceive to be, "politics." Hence, a key aspect of building deliberative skills as citizens involves reconceptualizing the meaning of the word "politics" to include all those ways, not just governmental, in which citizens make decisions together about their common life.

Deliberation is different from debate and from mere polite conversation or effective group dynamics. Deliberation is not therapeutic (although therapeutic releases may occur). Deliberation is political. It involves making choices that have real applications and real consequences. Deliberation requires framing of an issue in public, not expert, terms. That framing always involves more than two choices, hence deliberation lies outside the dynamics of debate involving only two polarized positions.

Deliberation rarely occurs in sustained, easily observable fashion. Moments of deliberation in a forum (formal or informal) are like deposits of oil dispersed as molecules in a rock formation, not existing in discernible pools. However, the capacity for sustained, effective deliberation can be increased by practice and concentration.

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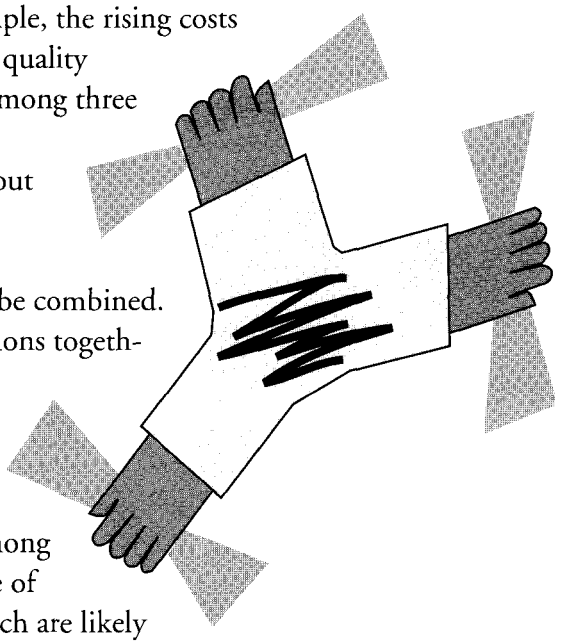
Concentration involves the willingness to explore the pros and cons and trade-offs in all possible choices. Most especially, concentration involves identifying and focusing on the fundamental tensions that make an issue an issue. True issues in public life are often masked by calling broad topics "issues." Education, crime, poverty, environment, etc., are not issues; they are topics. An issue involves tensions among more than two things held valuable. For example, the rising costs of providing broader access to quality health care involves tensions among three things held valuable: access or coverage, costs, and choice about quality. We have no certainty about the ways in which these things held valuable may best be combined. "Working through" these tensions together is the essence of deliberation. These tensions identify the fundamental unknowable in an issue. That unknowable involves a risk among participants to pursue a course of action, the exact results of which are likely resistant to tangible measurement. Deliberation involves discovering what participants can live with amid their differences and their uncertainties.



Reducing uncertainties in a true issue places a value on diversity. Recurring questions in effective deliberation are "Who is not here?" and "How would they see this issue?" Deliberation is open-ended. It engages the unknown. It seeks community. Deliberation focuses on solving common problems from which personal meaning and identity are derived, not establishing identity before engaging in problem solving. These two activities are invariably intertwined, but it is important which takes precedence. When establishing identity as a primary consideration, the speeches that often go with that activity too frequently separate participants in addressing a common problem and hinder its resolution. Individuals participating in deliberation do so as individual human beings meeting individual human beings, not as representatives of different groups.

"Deliberation is open-ended. It engages the unknown. It seeks community."

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All these elements of deliberation are made easier to implement by a few simple guidelines. A moderator must remain neutral in guiding a deliberation. Participants must listen as well as speak. Participants must realize that everyone has good reasons in their own mind for how they understand a matter. Therefore, their observations are interesting, not ignorant or immoral. The task of deliberation is to understand all the choices and how participants see them, not to "win" a contest. A measure of effectiveness is the ability to make a good case for the choice one likes the least as well as the choice one likes the most. Consequently, all choices before a group must be given full consideration. Participants must move toward a choice, not merely analyze. No one session of deliberation is likely to reach a final decision. Deliberation leads to deliberation leads to deliberation until common ground for action is uncovered and political will to implement that action is created. To assess progress, a group participating in a deliberative session should reflect at the end on how individual perspectives may have changed, how the group's perspectives may have changed, and what needs further deliberation. Deliberation's goal is application, but that application (complementary action) may be much different from "business as usual" concepts of political action.

Above all, deliberating together is learning together through joint reflection. A self-governing, democratic society of necessity requires a self-educating, learning citizenry. Deliberating is learning. Deliberating is at the heart of the educational enterprise.

What Does Civic Learning Tell Us about Experiential Education?

The above discussion reminds us of some guiding principles of experiential education. Experiential education is education based on experience. Experiential education is not merely having an experience. Experiential learning is not merely focusing on one phase of a cycle of learning. Focusing on only one part of a circle of learning (service-learning, for example) is limiting. To use an analogy from geometry, one point is merely a dot unconnected to anything else. Two points (service-learning and a classical curriculum, for example) provide a narrow line of connection with maximum possibility of falling off in either direction. Three points (service-learning, classical curriculum, and a democratic campus, for example) provide definition of a surface, but a surface absent

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the capacity to change. The fourth point of deliberation, like the legs on a table, produces a surface with the likelihood of wobble. Life together is constant wobble. In civic learning, we must deliberate (itself an experience) with one another to make a choice of how to combine the best of the other three choices for maximum learning effectiveness.

Given individual differentiation, the need for capacity to adjust ourselves to one another is always present — if we will admit the necessity that we must live together. Deliberative democracy is that form of politics that gives us maximum opportunity to do so effectively. But deliberative democracy does not work unless we bring everyone to the table as equals in the experience of learning.

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HUMANITIES STUDY AND PUBLIC DELIBERATION

By Peggy W. Prenshaw

In the early 1970s, when the state humanities councils were organized under the sponsorship of the newly authorized National Endowment for the Humanities, I first began to think seriously about the relation of humanities study to public deliberation and civic life. With a newly minted Ph.D., I had only recently commenced my academic career and was eager and anxious to understand and validate my work as an English professor. How was I to "make a difference" in my society? How to be a good teacher, a competent literary critic, a responsible member of the department and the university faculty? And how to answer my students in required core classes of sophomore literature who asked, "Prof, what good is this to me?"

Twenty-five years later, a Kettering Foundation project on the "Humanities and Public Deliberation" has allowed me to reflect on my career as an academic humanist, to return to some of those formative questions that so engaged me at my outsetting, to inquire specifically into the relation between the literary classroom and the public forum, and to clarify what I have learned about the relation of my work to society's common good.

In a prescient and illuminating book, *Hamlet's Castle: The Study of Literature as a Social Experience* (1976), Gordon Mills, a professor under whom I studied in the 1960s at the University of Texas, sought to understand and describe the nature of literary experience as it is manifest within the context of a group discussion. What Mills' analysis so methodically and fully elucidates is how a group of disparate persons, assembled in a classroom to discuss a literary text, go about constructing knowledge. Reaching some kind of consensus (or acquiescing to irresolvable disagreement) about the meaning and significance of a text is demanding work, intellectually and emotionally and, as Mills suggests, it is analogous to the deliberations that citizens in a democratic society must necessarily employ in deciding issues of public policy.

Among the most salient characteristics of a university classroom (especially in a large land-grant university like the one in

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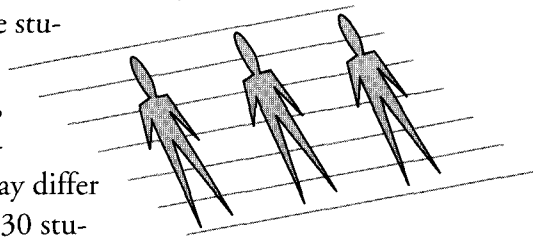
"Accommodating otherness is a pivotal experience in face-to-face discussions."

which I teach, Louisiana State University) is that of the diversity of the students. Age, class, family, gender, economic, ethnic, racial, linguistic, and geographical backgrounds may differ widely in a group of, say, 30 students. Like participants in National Issues Forums, town hall meetings, or public humanities programs, the students encounter the powerful "otherness" of their classmates. Accommodating such otherness, or difference, is a pivotal experience in face-to-face discussions about the meaning of human experience as it is incarnated in poems, plays, stories, and essays. Agreements occur, but often, and more instructively for everyone, disagreements, even confrontations, arise about issues within or suggested by the text. Multiple views and differing personal experiences, which are frequently offered as anecdotes to illustrate and bolster one's position, threaten to lead to confusion and irresolution. Discussants may be vexed by the disorder, and they will often look to the professor or moderator to settle disputes, make decisions, and restore "order." If no such intervention is offered, then the group comes to realize that the knowledge they need to interpret the text or answer the public policy question is a knowledge they will have to construct by deliberating with one another.



Drawing on my experience as a professor in the classroom and as a participant in and moderator of various public forums over the past 25 years, I should like to inquire into the nature of the activity that takes place when groups gather with the shared purpose of discussing a text or topic and of finding — or making — points of agreement about what the "facts" are (i.e., what and how legitimate are the truth claims implied in texts, data, or experts' assertions), about what the words mean, what judgments are valid, and thus what attitude is appropriate and, finally, what response in attitude and, perhaps, action is enjoined on the participant as a consequence of the discussion.

What the Literary Classroom and the Public Forum Share

Typically, the seminar and the forum begin with the gathering of information, the group having read a literary text or an informational text such as a National Issues Forums booklet — or

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seen media reports and engaged in conversations about issues — prior to the session. Respectful attention is usually accorded the introductory presentations by a moderator or teacher, or by an expert who "frames" the problem or task and the possible solutions that might be considered. Subsequently, the group's engagement begins.

A discussion-based literary classroom may be quite like a public forum. A professor will likely be far more expert than her students about the life and times of an author studied, about literary genres, theoretical approaches, and the critical debates surrounding a given work. But provided with some basic introductory information about such matters, the students, with full access to the primary text before them, may knowledgeably join a discussion about interpretation and significance. What they bring with them is their own life experience, their familiarity with the language, and their possession of the culture, however limited or expansive these may be.

"The Yellow Wallpaper"

One of the most dramatic portrayals in American literature of a troubled family is that reflected in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's 1892 short story, "The Yellow Wallpaper," now a standard text in many undergraduate anthologies. Narrated in the first person by a woman living through an experience of severe depression, the story raises questions about the causes of the woman's suffering — a physiological postpartum depression? a misguided medical therapy, a "rest cure" that exacerbates her condition? a feckless husband, himself a physician, who is distressed and puzzled by his wife's behavioral change and thereby "enables" the pernicious therapy advised by the "expert"? social mores that proscribe active participation by women in the world of ideas and work and thus consign women to passive, infantilized, depressive lives?

One may gather many facts about the story's composition, its author, its historical context, its literary devices, and so on, but none of these decisively answers the questions posed above. (No more than does a study of Shakespeare finally answer the question of why Hamlet is melancholy.) The answer to the question of what causes the woman's suffering is constrained, limited by the text, but it is constructed (that is, hypothesized, composed) by the reader, who may test and validate the legitimacy of his or her private interpretation by gathering assent from a group who as a *collective*

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undertake to interpret the "meaning" of the short story.

"... knowledge produced by a group joined in a project of understanding and naming human experience is knowledge essential to their well-being."

Because the story is narrated by the mentally ill woman, fully dramatized as a "living" experience that calls on the reader fully as much for analysis as for empathy, it is easy to recognize the similarity between a discussion of its interpretation and any other kind of public assembly gathered to analyze a social issue and consider what causes (and thereby what solutions) one may ascertain. The comparison I am pursuing here is that of the empirical undecidability of the questions raised by the text and a similar undecidability of public policy questions raised in citizens' forums. Resolution is reached by persuasion, by enlisting empathetic agreement, by noting facts, recalling historical precedents, reporting relevant personal experience, raising questions about the language and actions manifest in the text. An interpretation of a literary text, like a group's response to discussion of a public policy issue, is an act of judgment, an act that is language-bound, culture-bound. It is contingent on the disposition of a group of individuals in a given place at a given moment. But the knowledge produced by a group joined in a project of understanding and naming human experience — and of deciding on reasonable attitudes and actions to take in response to any given experience — is knowledge essential to their well-being.

Getting from the Particular to the General

As a distanced observer watching a discussion in action, one is struck by a certain rambling, anecdotal, inconclusive, and overall *inefficient* method of analysis taking place, that is, if one is measuring in minutes and looking for a linear progression of logical argument. The group spends most of its time reciting, listening, and responding to particular cases. Similarly in a literature class, the group devotes itself to noticing details recounted in the story, such as the progressively aberrant behavior of the narrator of "The Yellow Wallpaper," often responding with parallel or elucidating personal narratives, implicitly or explicitly constructing an increasingly rich, dense reference pool of experience. The group thus goes about its work of ascertaining the *meaning* of the data and texts — i.e., What are the statistics showing? What is the story saying? There is general willingness to consider any and all kinds of evidence, that of anecdote, analogy, and parable, as readily as census data. Participants raise questions of semantics, noting contested

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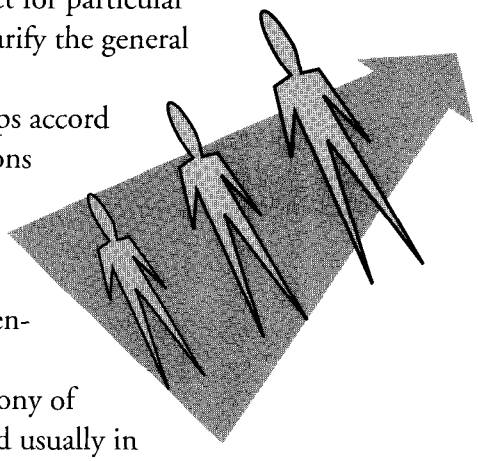
denotations, ambiguous connotations that depend on changing contexts. They cast a wide net for particular cases that will express and clarify the general issue at hand.



It seems clear that groups accord more trust to those conclusions they come to on the basis of direct-witness experience reported firsthand than on those drawn from generalized data or secondhand testimony alone. This testimony of personal experience, delivered usually in some form of narrative and offered rhetorically as an application or instance of the issue or text under discussion, is a mode of thinking. Rather than a diverting of the conversation, such personal narratives help clarify for the person and for the group those theories or assumptions that shape the discussant's way of seeing. Further, the various citings of personal experience help to test, modify, validate, or repudiate the truth claims of data, texts, and other asserted information. Equally important is the rhetorical necessity of such case making toward engaging the discussants' ethical, empathetic, and aesthetic faculties, all of which are requisite to the group's well-being and right functioning. The stories that participants offer in forums are like the metaphors in poetry. They keep the sentient human being (and the sensible world) central to discussions of the public good, protecting against generalizations that deform or tyrannize the individual.

"The stories that participants offer in forums are like the metaphors in poetry. They keep the sentient human being central to discussions of the public good."

I should like also to inquire briefly into the question of what kind of connection may exist between a scholar in the humanities, specifically a literature teacher, and a moderator of a public forum. The study of literature touches on many kinds of content and differing approaches to knowledge, but one main feature of literary study is the interpreting of a wide and diverse range of human experience that is embodied and located in the world — imaginable as a felt world — but that is represented in linguistic structures — that is, in contestable symbols. The variety of human experience comprised in literature's purview and the complexity arising from the medium of interpretation — that is, the unstable words — are the conditions faced by both a literature class deliber-

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ating about what happens in a text and a citizens' group trying to reach consensus about a common problem or issue in a National Issues Forum.

The Societal Value of Deliberative Group Discussion

Among the witnesses to the societal value of deliberative group discussion, I should like to return finally to Gordon Mills and to his analysis of the literary classroom and the endeavor that takes place there to interpret a text collaboratively and to reach a decision about its "meaning" by means of consensus. Mills rightly observes that the literary classroom is a "microstructure" and "does not address itself to the problem of governing the nation," but he follows this disclaimer by noting, "Micro, of course, means small; it does not mean unimportant." Learning in a group — through the diverse perceptions of others and through the employment of mediation to reach conclusions — how to feel, interpret, and respond to texts that reflect diverse experience, is education of the most serious and necessary kind in a democracy such as that of the United States. Practicing the process of deliberation is the most essential "core requirement" for a student of literature or for the citizen for whom the NIF forums or state humanities council programs are designed. Issues come and go; elections come and go; information is constantly outdated and updated, but the process of men and women reasoning together is ongoing.

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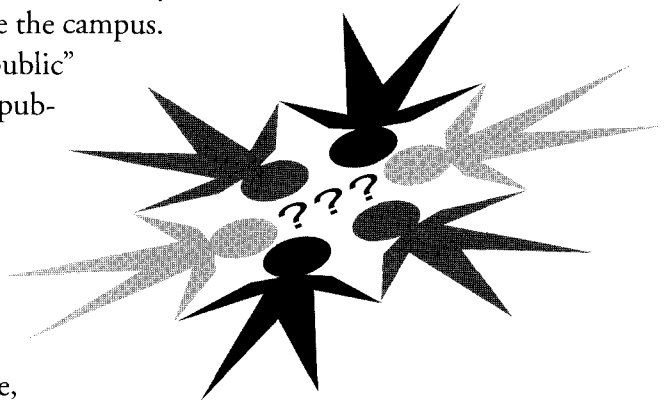
WHAT EXACTLY IS "THE PUBLIC"?

By David Mathews

When Robert Beauregard writes about the *public* negotiation of knowledge or being understood in the *public*, he has in mind a particular definition of the word. When Susanna Finnell describes *public* thinking in a forum, she reveals a different, equally valid understanding. In a journal created to explore the relationship between the public and the academy, it may be useful to look at varying notions of what a public is and what it does. The differences in meaning have important implications for that relationship. As Mary Stanley points out, the way higher education understands the public influences the way it interacts with the world outside the campus.



In some cases, "public" means ordinary, as in public citizens. Or it may refer to something open to everyone as in public rest rooms and public transportation. The public can be everyone, the mass, the many. Elsewhere, "public" means government, as in public official. The two words are often used interchangeably, so that mayors, governors, and members of Congress are called public officials, even though they are really government officials. Some take exception to this practice, noting that the public and the government are not the same; for scholars like Claire Snyder, following Parker Palmer's lead, the public realm is older, more inclusive, and more fundamental than the world of government.

Richer understandings of "public" are suggested in the origin of the term. It seems to derive from some combination of the Latin words for people, *populus*, and for maturity, *pubes*. A "public" can mean a body of mature people, presumably those who have the sense of responsibility that we associate with adults. In this reading, there would be quite a difference between a public

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and a crowd of people or the inhabitants of a particular city or state.

Other Meanings of "Public"

Given the importance of ways of relating, it is useful to think of publicness rather than just publics — to focus on how people become connected instead of debating whether there is such a thing as "the public." I use the term "publicness" rather than the more popular "sense of community" intentionally, in order to focus on the way people behave when they join together rather than the feelings they have about one another. I don't mean to minimize the importance of feelings or the necessity for a sense of comity. My purpose in looking at such things as the way people work together as members of a public is to explore the full range of meanings of the word.

Public as a Way of Relating Different Interests

Gerald Taylor, of the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), tries to build what he calls "public relationships" in the places where he works as a community organizer. While he sees public life and private life overlapping, he thinks they are separate spheres, each governed by its own rules of behavior. Public relationships begin in acknowledging differences among interests rather than trying to homogenize them. A public relationship is pragmatic; various parties cooperate because their interests, though different, are related.

Here is an account from Harry Boyte of how IAF operated in Baltimore to build public relationships by connecting interests. When leaders of Baltimore BUILD, a local civic organization assisted by IAF, first met with Senator Paul Sarbanes, he smiled, took out his notebook and asked what he could do for them. The leaders said something to this effect: Nothing — we're here to get to know you. We want to know why you're in the U.S. Senate and what your interests are. They may connect to some of ours. If they do, we may be able to develop a working relationship over time.

Organizers attempting to build public relationships aren't just trying to solve specific problems, they are trying to change the way people habitually deal with one another. While they acknowledge that public relationships are subject to change and that alliances may shift, they hope that public ways of relating can become ongoing habits. Their aim is to create public life even when interests differ and conventional power is distributed unequally. Public relationships don't require that people like one another, or that

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there be equality among the parties, or that there be a promise of equal distribution of outcomes. Though filled with tensions, public ways of relating are an alternative to the clash of differences.

Public as a Sense of Responsibility

Public relationships have several distinctive characteristics. None is more important than the personal and collective responsibility that undergirds them. Public relationships depend on citizens claiming responsibility for their fate. In one community, people working on a clean water project expressed their sense of ownership something like this: We are accountable for what happens to us, not somebody else; we are responsible for our problems; we aren't innocent victims of what someone else has done to us.

In another community, as reported by Jeremy Brecher and Tim Costello in their book, *Building Bridges* (Monthly Review Press, 1990), this one in western Connecticut, an area hard hit by plant closings, a citizen explained the need to claim responsibility this way: "All workers have to realize that we're responsible for our own condition. If we don't devote some time to our unions, our political party, our church organizations, and the laws being enacted, we'll wake up and find ourselves with empty pension funds, bankrupt companies, disproportionate sacrifices, and a run-down community." Davis Merritt, a newspaper editor in Wichita, expressed the same conviction at a seminar sponsored by the Kettering Foundation in 1992: "The only way . . . for the community to be a better place to live is for the people of the community to understand and accept their personal responsibility for what happens." Citizen ownership of problems is the *sine qua non* of a democratic public.

Public as Power

Where public life is strong, you usually find a distinctive mind-set about power. It takes on a public meaning. Conventionally, power means control over scarce resources or a license to act. This kind of power is finite, in limited supply. Particular people and institutions have authority to act; others are powerless and must be "empowered" by the powerful. Yet writers like Mary Parker Follett and Harry Boyte have argued that the power given by others isn't real power and that no one can empower someone else because power grows out of each person's unique experiences and talents.

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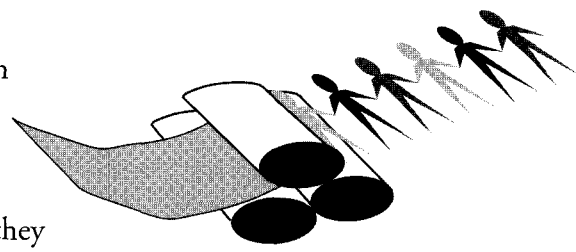
For public life to be robust, people must surely have a broader concept of power, a notion of how even those who have no formal authority or control over existing resources could accomplish something. In fact, some citizen groups are well aware of the kinds of power that people generate themselves. They believe that power grows out of people's innate capacities and is amplified through their ability to band together.

Seeing power as public, as a capacity of citizens joined together, leads to the conviction that local people must solve local problems. In some communities, citizens have said, "We are the solution," echoing an old song from the civil rights movement: "We Are the Ones We Have Been Waiting for."

Public as an Amalgam of Diverse Capacities

Public power is powerful not just because people are joined together in a relationship that works but because the public realm embraces a rich array of resources. John Kretzmann and John McKnight, in their book *Building Communities from the Inside Out* (Center for Urban Affairs and Policy Research, 1993) explain why seeing people as a storehouse of assets rather than only as a collection of needs is so critical. Thinking of a public as the sum of the capacities of citizens has the potential to change the understanding of "participation" from a right to an asset. Everyone can be seen as a glass half empty or half full, McKnight says. By labeling people with the names of their deficiencies (i.e., their needs), we miss what is most important to them — opportunities to "express and share their gifts, skills, capacities, and abilities." The only way communities can become stronger, he argues, is by harnessing the sum of everyone's abilities. That precept has evidently guided the citizens of Delray Beach, Florida, whose recent civic projects have been based on the principle, "err on the side of inclusion." Don't leave a lot of people on the sidelines.

Public-Making



How do people with diverse interests come to identify points of interdependence among those interests? How do they come to bring their talents together in powerful coalitions of action? How do citizens come to take responsibility for their col-

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lective fate? Obviously, these things don't happen every day or in every place.

In order to understand publics more completely, we have to understand how they form. Certainly academic institutions should base their relationships with the public on their sense of what happens in public-making.

Public-Making as Making Choices

Early in human history, we went beyond our private lives as family members to form multifamily tribes and eventually to create larger political communities, or publics, in order to deal with threats to our collective well-being. Because we had to act together, we developed specialized means of making decisions together. So a public can be understood as a diverse body of citizens joined together to make choices about how to advance their common well-being. As Peggy Prenshaw found out, making choices together is not only a prerequisite for acting together without coercion, it is also a practice that breeds collective responsibility and builds public relationships. It generates a sense of power as well as insights into new possibilities for acting. And organizing talk for making decisions is the first step toward organizing action into a complementary enterprise.

We shouldn't confuse the choices we make in public about what is most valuable to us with simple preferences. When we pick one brand of soup rather than another, we merely consult our tastes; the consequences are not too serious, since we can always switch brands. Real choice, however — the kind of decision we make privately when we marry or select a career, or the kind we make publicly about the type of community we want — requires us to dig deeper. Because the consequences are great, we have to think carefully about what they might be and whether we can accept them. We have to look inside ourselves in order to determine what is really most important.

In making public choices, we seem to be motivated by a reservoir of things that have great significance in our common life. Of more value to us than the interests that grow out of our immediate circumstances, these are the ends for which we live, such as the security of our families. They are also conditions that we cherish, such as the freedom or opportunity to realize our goals.

The many things we value move us in different directions, and so our decision making is inevitably fraught with tensions. There is no escaping contradictory tugs and pulls and no escaping

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the feelings that are generated by the resulting dilemmas. The conflicts are not so much between us as opponents as among all of us and within us individually. They are shared moral struggles over what is best.

When it comes to our health, for instance, we want the best care, and we also want the most affordable care. Yet the better the care technically, the more costly and less affordable it is. Any policy for dealing with the cost of technically advanced health care runs squarely into this predicament. Every option we come up with on this and similar issues will have both positive and negative implications for what we hold dear.

The conflicts we have to deal with in making choices together aren't simply conflicts between different individuals or interests, as when environmentalists oppose developers or conservatives oppose liberals. In either case, people in one camp aren't likely to be in the other. Yet, when it comes to the things of greatest importance, people most often find themselves in the same camp.

Public-Making as Deliberative Dialogue

Choice making is most effective when we use the kind of talk appropriate to collective decision making — deliberative dialogue.

If we are to increase the possibility that our decisions will be wise, we can't just sound off, argue over solutions, or clarify our values. We have to struggle with hard choices, considering the pros and cons of each option. That is deliberation in a nutshell. Deliberation helps us know whether our decisions are sound; it helps us determine whether we are willing to accept the consequences of the actions we are about to take.

Most political discussions are debates. Charges and countercharges turn politics into a never-ending series of contests. People are swept into taking sides; their energy goes into figuring out whom or what they're for or against. Deliberation is different. It is neither partisan argument, where opposing sides try to win, nor casual conversation conducted with civility. It is a vehicle for making tough choices about basic purposes and directions.

Deliberative dialogue also involves weighing the views of others; mutual understanding is vital. Because no one person or small group of people has all the insight needed to decide what is best, it is essential that citizens with different outlooks share their perspectives. "You are forced," one participant said, "to look at the consequences for people not in the room."

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Public-Making as Creating New Knowledge

It is clear that more happens in deliberative forums like the ones Susanna Finnell participated in than discrete shifts in attitudes on policy issues. In deliberating, citizens create a distinctive kind of knowledge, knowledge of the public produced by the public. People practiced in deliberation even look beyond their forums for additional points of view. A moderator of a forum in El Paso said: "Deliberation gives people a sense that . . . they have something unique to add to political discourse, which is a product of their deliberation."

Deliberation is about decision making, and those who deliberate try to inform their decisions. But they require a kind of knowledge different from what is usually thought to "educate" citizens — different from, though not necessarily better or worse than, the information provided by professionals, experts, and officeholders. Deliberative dialogue produces this kind of knowledge, which seems to be similar to what scholars call socially constructed knowledge. You might call it "public knowledge" because it consists of things people can know only when they engage one another — and never when they are alone. Such knowledge indicates how citizens see an issue or the framework they use in approaching it; it shows what is valuable to people and where there are tensions among the many things citizens consider important. Public knowledge reveals what people are or aren't willing to do to solve problems, what costs and consequences they will or won't accept, and whether there is a shared sense of direction or possibility for action.

Reimagining the Public Sphere

I hope future issues of the *Exchange* will play out the implications of these different understandings of "public" for the way colleges and universities have seen their responsibilities in teaching, research, and service. At Kettering, we are in conversations with institutions like the College of St. Catherine in St. Paul, Minnesota, which are rethinking their relationship with the public; and we are trying to formulate questions they might ask themselves in connection with this effort. Here are some examples — first drafts, of course:

- The mode of discourse appropriate to a democratic public has been described as deliberative dialogue, which promotes mutual understanding in order to produce the sound decisions need-

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ed for effective public work. What does our institution do to promote this form of discourse? What do we do to prepare our students to enter the public dialogue? Would the conversation on campus be described as deliberative dialogue?

- A public constructs knowledge socially in order to develop wisdom about how to respond to problems and realize aspirations. In addition to producing and disseminating expert, scientific, professional knowledge, what contribution does our institution make to the creation of such wisdom?
- How does our institution enter the public sphere? Are its actions consistent with the political processes we believe essential to a healthy, public democracy? What understanding of the public and its powers is implied in our work?

Perhaps you can suggest questions of your own; the editors of the *Exchange* would be happy to hear from you.

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